Never Gone

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AU. Complete! Chp 32 up! The Jedi refuse to train Anakin. He returns to Tatooine in hopes of freeing his mother. But he and Padme keep in touch. Ten years later, Anakin sets out to reunite with the woman he loves. AnakinPadme. AU fic, Anakin is not a Jedi

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Never Gone

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AN: Here's a brand new story. Enjoy and please let me know what you think! This is an AU fic that starts out at Obi-Wan's knighting at the end of episode I. Master Yoda forbids Obi-Wan to train Anakin and despite his promise to his master and he agrees. Therefore Anakin does not become a Jedi and he is free to love Padme. This will be kind of a fun, romantic, and sexy story. But it will have the action, adventure and conflict as well. This story also has nothing to do with the A Matter of Trust/A Matter of Hope storyline. So enjoy!

Never Gone

Chapter 1: Never Gone

The things we did, the things we said

Keep coming back to me and make me smile again

You showed me how to face the truth

Everything that's good in me I owe to you

Though the distance that's between us

Now may seem to be too far

It will never separate us

Deep inside I know you are

Never gone, never far

In my heart is where you are

Always close, everyday

Every step along the way

Even though for now we've got to say goodbye

I know you will be forever in my life

Never gone

"Trial enough your battle with the Sith was. Confer on you, the rank of Jedi Knight the council does," Yoda said, as he severed Obi-Wan's padawan braid.

"Thank you master. What of the boy? I promised master Qui-Gon that I would train him," Obi-Wan said.

"Hmm...train the boy, you will not," Yoda said.

"But master, I promised," Obi-Wan protested.

"Just became a knight yourself. Ready for a padawan you think you are already?" Yoda asked. Obi-Wan lowered his head. He knew Master Yoda was right, he was not ready. Especially not for a boy as exceptionally gifted in the Force as Anakin. Perhaps, this would be for the best.

" *I'm sorry master,"* Obi-Wan silently apologized.

"You're right master. He did destroy the control ship and save Naboo, so I will allow him to accompany me back to Naboo for the celebration. Then, I will either let him stay or see that he returns to his mother on Tatooine. The queen is very fond of him, I'm sure she will see to his safety," Obi-Wan said. Yoda nodded satisfactorily.

"But you promised that I would become a Jedi," Anakin said sadly.

"I know Anakin and I'm sorry, but it's just not meant to be. You'll be returning to Naboo for the celebration. Then Queen Amidala says you can stay on Naboo or return to your mother. Perhaps someday, you'll be able to free her," Obi-Wan suggested. Anakin bowed his head sadly. Obi-Wan ruffled his hair and left him with his thoughts.

"Ani, can I come in?" Padme's voice said through his door.

"Sure," Anakin replied.

"I'm sorry Ani, I know you must be disappointed. But I want you to know that you can stay on Naboo if you want," Padme said. She had come dressed in the simple attire of a handmaiden, rather than as the queen.

"Why do you care about me? The Jedi don't," Anakin replied sadly.

"Ani, I will always care about you. You're very special to me," Padme replied, as she brushed the blonde locks from his eyes.

"I want to stay on Naboo...but I can't leave my mom a slave. I have to go back and free her. When I do, I could come back, couldn't I?" he asked. She smiled.

"Of course. Here, I want you to have this," Padme said, as she handed him a small datapad.

"What's this?" Anakin asked.

"It's a data messenger. We can write to each other all the time with it," Padme said. Anakin's eyes widened.

"Really!" he asked.

"Sure," she replied.

Anakin returned to Naboo with Padme for the celebration for victory during the battle of Naboo. Shortly after that, Anakin shared a tearful

goodbye with Padme before he would leave aboard a small Nubian cruiser that Padme had given to him.

"I'll miss you everyday," Anakin said.

"I'll miss you too Ani, but I know we'll meet again. You're never gone Ani, because in my heart is where you are," Padme replied. Anakin smiled, as the Force showed him a glimpse of his future. A future in which included Padme. He smiled.

"I know. Goodbye Padme," Anakin said.

"Goodbye Ani," she replied, as he boarded the ship and left Naboo. Padme was suddenly very sad, as was Anakin. But something told them both that they would meet again someday...

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10 years later...

Anakin Skywalker looked proudly at the Nubian cruiser that he had just finished fixing. The desert was hard on machines such as it and Anakin had his work cut out for him after not having used the ship in so long. After returning to Tatooine ten years ago, Anakin worked fixing things here and there for anyone who would pay him so he could raise the money to free his mother. He raced pods for Watto, winning more than a few races over the years. Five years ago, his mother had fallen in love with a farmer that came into Watto's's shop one day. When Anakin heard that the farmer wanted to free his mother and marry her, he had put his money with the man's and they freed her. That was the day he and his mother left Mos Espa for the Lars moisture farm. He got along well with his step father and his step brother, who was about three years older than him. Anakin spent his time learning the ways of the moisture farm from Cliegg and Owen, but Shmi knew that it was not the kind of work that interested Anakin. He spent a lot of his time repairing the machinery around the farm, which was saving the Lars family a lot of money. But not a day went by the Anakin did not think of Padme. He received data letters from her as often as she could send them.

Padme was now the Senator of Naboo and very busy. But she never forgot to write to Anakin when she could and he wrote back in earnest. Shmi knew that Anakin longed to go to her, but would never do so unless she told him it was okay. Shmi Skywalker Lars sighed. It was time let her little Ani go...for good this time. She walked into the garage, only to see her son polishing his silver ship.

"Hey mom," Anakin greeted.

"Hello Ani," she replied, as she kissed his grease covered cheek.

"She looks pretty good, huh?" Anakin asked.

"That she does. Anakin, I want to talk to you about something," Shmi said.

"Sure," Anakin said, as he sat down next to her.

"Ani, I want you to know that I don't expect you to stay here forever. I know that you love me and I'm grateful that you would stay here just to make me happy. But you need to make yourself happy and I know that the only way you'll be truly happy is if you're with her," Shmi said.

"Am I that obvious?" Anakin asked. Shmi laughed.

"You're my son, I know these things. And I know that you're in love with her," Shmi said.

"I haven't seen her in ten years mom," Anakin replied.

"Yes, but you talk to her all the time. I think it's high time you went to see her and that you finally told her how you feel," Shmi replied.

"But what if she doesn't feel the same mom? Why would a beautiful Senator and former queen want a desert rat and former slave," Anakin said pessimistically.

"Anakin Skywalker, you are no desert rat. You're very handsome and perhaps you should ask yourself another question. What if she does feel the same?" Shmi reasoned with him. He gave her a crooked smile and nodded.

"Besides, I want to have some grandchildren someday while I'm young enough to enjoy them. And goodness knows, if I wait on Owen to get around to proposing to Beru, I will be too old," Shmi joked. Anakin blushed.

"Mom, I haven't even told her how I feel yet and you have us having kids already," Anakin complained. Shmi patted his cheek playfully.

"Come on, you have packing to do," Shmi said, as she dragged her son into the house.

Senator Padme Amidala packed her things in her travel case, furiously. By the chancellor's orders, she was being sent home because of the assassination attempts on her life. And the worst part was, she was being put under Jedi protection. It wouldn't have been so bad if it was just master Kenobi, for he was decent to talk to and had a sense of humor. But the Jedi Knight they had assignedherput evenMace Windu to shame. Jedi Knight Sev Urkin stood in her doorway, arms crossed stoically. He was a middle aged man with black hair and a muddled complexion. And he seemed to wear a permanent frown. She sighed and picked up her data messenger and smiled, thinking of Anakin. In his last document to her, he was fixing up his ship, hoping to come see her. She wanted nothing more, for she could really use a friend right now.

"Senator, we must be leaving the capital soon," the stoic Jedi told her. She suppressed a glare at him, wondering how anyone could sound so monotone.

"I'm almost ready master Jedi," she replied, as she closed her case and motioned for Artoo to follow her. Not long after that, they departed on a public transport for Naboo. Her Jedi companion

remained stoic and silent for the most part. So much so, that she found Artoo to be better company and she wasn't carrying his translator.

"Safe journey Ani," Shmi said, as she kissed his cheek. He hugged his mother, followed by Cliegg, Owen and Beru.

"We'll come visit soon," Anakin said.

"You better, the rest of us want to meet this girl that we've heard so much about," Cliegg told him. Anakin smiled and nodded, before getting on his ship. Mom was sending Threepio with him, though he had no idea why. Threepio was currently complaining about how he had never flown and Anakin was sure it was going to be the same thing the whole flight.

"Strap in Threepio, we're taking off," Anakin told him.

"Oh my. I simply don't see why we have to go anywhere master Ani. Space travel simply sounds dreadful and dangerous," Threepio complained.

"I'm going to find the woman of my dreams. That's why we're leaving," Anakin replied. Threepio wasn't exactly sure what he met, so he was silent for a moment. Silent at least until Anakin powered up the thrusters and blasted out of the atmosphere. Anakin rolled his eyes at his droid's incessant chatter. At least it wouldn't be a quiet flight...

Never gone, never far

In my heart is where you are

Always close, everyday

Every step along the way

Even though for now we've got to say goodbye

I know you will be forever in my life

Never gone

Reunited

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here, cause it's fun. Don't own the lyrics to the song Never Gone by BSB either.

AN: Here's chapter 2! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 2: Reunited

The things we did, the things we said

Keep coming back to me and make me smile again

You showed me how to face the truth

Everything that's good in me I owe to you

Though the distance that's between us

Now may seem to be too far

It will never separate us

Deep inside I know you are

Never gone, never far

In my heart is where you are

Always close, everyday

Every step along the way

Even though for now we've got to say goodbye

I know you will be forever in my life

Never gone

Obi-Wan was genuinely perplexed by the mystery unfolding. The archive computers had come up with nothing on the planet Kamino, which was where Dex had assured him that the saber dart that was in the gun left behind by Zam Wessel had come from. Now, master Yoda had concluded that someone must have erased the planet from the temple data banks. As Obi-Wan carefully packed extra clothes in his travel case for his trip to Kamino, he thought about everything that had happened. He wondered how his friend Senator Amidala was coming along. He imagined that she was finding Sev to be quite boring. Sev had been trained by Master Windu and it was a running joke in the temple that Mace had rubbed off on his former padawan a little too much. Sev was the grumpiest Jedi Knight he knew. Obi-Wan finished packing and left for the docking bay. His mission was to find Kamino and uncover this mystery around Senator Amidala's assassination attempts.

Anakin Skywalker was immediately granted clearance to land at the palace. It seems that no one had forgotten the boy that destroyed the control ship ten years ago. Anakin was a bit surprised at how easily he had gotten through. He hoped getting to Padme would be as easy. The crew in the docking bay informed him that someone would be coming to meet him.

"Anakin?" a female voice asked. He turned and smiled.

"Hello Sabe," he greeted.

"Goodness, someone sure has grown," Sabe replied.

"Did you expect me to still be a little boy?" Anakin joked.

"No, I'm just having a hard time believing its been ten years," Sabe replied.

"Me too. I came to see Padme, I mean...Senator Amidala," Anakin stuttered. Sabe smiled.

"You're in luck. Padme just arrived on Naboo this morning. She's still here in her quarters. There's a bit of a situation on Coruscant, but I'll let her fill you in. She'll be so happy to see you," Sabe said. Anakin smiled. He had hoped that she would.

Anakin waited patiently outside Padme's senatorial suite in the palace, while Sabe announced him.

"Milady, you have a visitor," Sabe said. Padme wondered who it could be since not many knew she was even back on Naboo. She could see that the Jedi was ready to protest, so she nodded. She was almost completely caught off guard by the handsome young man that entered her quarters. He was very tall with shaggy blonde hair that brushed at his shoulders. He wore a sandy colored tunic, dark pants, and a dark vest. His skin was perfectly bronzed like he had spent a lot of time out in the sun and he had a handsome face, with chiseled features. He gazed at her and Padme gazed back into his gorgeous pair of sapphire eyes. Only one person in the galaxy had eyes like that.

"Anakin?" she asked. He flashed her a crooked grin at her and she felt her knees go weak.

"You recognize me?" Anakin asked. She smiled.

"You've grown so much, but I could never forget your eyes Ani," she replied, as she closed the distance between them and gave him a big hug.

"It's so good to see you," she said.

"It's good to see you too Padme. I've missed you," he said.

"I've missed you too Anakin. We've got a lot to catch up on," Padme replied.

"Forgive me for interrupting, but it is time for you to say goodbye and for us to move you to a more secure location," the frowning Jedi spoke.

"Secure location? Sabe said there was a situation on Coruscant. What's going on Padme?" Anakin asked, concern rising in his eyes.

"Ani, there's been two assassination attempts on my life. I was ordered to leave Coruscant and I was put under Jedi protection. This is Jedi Knight Sev Urkin," Padme said. Anakin nodded his greeting, his expression of concern still focused on Padme.

"Don't worry Ani, I'm safe here on Naboo. I plan to go to the Lake Country. It's very secluded and we can catch up more there," Padme said. Anakin smiled and nodded.

"Forgive me senator, but I will be choosing your location and I'm afraid that your friend cannot come," Sev frowned.

"Excuse me master Jedi, but this is my home and I know it very well, that is why we are here. The Lake Country is very secluded. We *are* going there and Anakin *is* coming with us," Padme responded shortly. Sev gritted his teeth, trying not to get angry with the bossy Senator. Anakin couldn't help but smirk. She was as fiery as ever and he loved it. Anakin picked up her travel case and then his own and followed her out to her speeder. About an hour later, they arrived at the Lake Country. Anakin was astounded by the beauty of Padme's planet. He had never seen so much crystal clear water in one place. Padme smiled, as he looked on at the scenery with a childlike wonder. Anakin stepped out of the water speeder and helped Padme out. Anakin was in awe of Padme's beauty even more so than he was with the scenery. She wore a flowing, multi-colored dress, which dipped low and left her entire back exposed. Anakin had nearly forgotten about the frowning Jedi that was following them.

"We used to come here during school retreat all the time. We would swim out to that island and lay on sand, letting the sun dry us," Padme told him. He smiled at her, but then a look of concern washed over his face again.

"Ani, what's wrong?" she asked.

"I just don't know how anyone could want to kill you," he replied. She smiled and put her hand on his.

"I'm okay Anakin. Master Kenobi is investigating the crimes himself," Padme assured him. Anakin smiled and nodded.

"So, how'd you get stuck with the stiff over there," Anakin whispered. Padme laughed.

"I'm beginning to wonder that myself. He is a bit of sourpuss, isn't he," Padme replied.

"I don't think I've seen him smile once," Anakin chuckled. Padme laughed.

"I'm so glad you're here Ani," she said. Anakin softly caressed her shoulder.

"I never want to be anywhere else again," he replied, gazing lovingly at her. She gazed back, her gaze mirroring his own. Anakin leaned closer to her, as he caressed her shoulder. She leaned in too, meeting him halfway. Their lips met in a soft kiss, that slowly grew in passion. Padme wrapped her arms around Anakin's neck, as he slowly moved his lips over hers. Anakin was in heaven, as his dream of kissing the angel in front of him came true. They finally broke the kiss, as the need to breathe forced them to.

"I've wanted to do that for the longest time," Anakin told her. Padme smiled and blushed a little.

"Are you hungry? I can make us a picnic lunch and we can go out to the meadow," Padme suggested.

"That sounds nice," Anakin replied, as he followed her inside.

Padme changed into a yellow floral sun dress that was off the shoulders. She let part of her hair down and put the rest in twin buns that rested on either side of her head. Anakin and Padme shared the picnic lunch on a blanket in the meadow, while the Jedi watched from the distance. They talked for hours about anything and everything. Anakin told Padme all about returning to Tatooine and working to free his mother. Then he told her about his mom falling in love with Cliegg Lars and how they moved to the moisture farm. Padme told him about the challenges she had faced as queen after the blockade and then her time as Senator. Padme had never felt like this before. Just this morning, she was furious about having leave the Senate behind, but now she couldn't think of anywhere else she'd rather be. In the space of a few hours, he had come in and swept her completely off her feet. She had always thought that she didn't have time to fall in love, but as she sat next to Anakin, she realized that perhaps a small part of her had been waiting for him. That somehow she knew, that he was the only boy she would ever love. That's why she now found herself hesitant to answer his question, for any boy she had ever previously kissed mattered nothing to her like the one sitting before her.

"I don't know," Padme said.

"You just don't want to tell me," Anakin replied. Padme rolled her eyes.

"Okay, I was twelve. His name was Palo. He had dark curly hair, dreamy eyes, very cute," Padme teased.

"All right, I get the picture. Whatever happened to him?" Anakin asked.

"I became queen and he went on to become an artist. What about you Ani? Who was your first kiss?" Padme asked. Anakin smiled.

"You were Padme, of course," he replied. She was a little taken aback by that. Anakin was very handsome and she imagined that the girls back home definitely noticed.

"Really?" she asked, as he looked away shyly.

"You're the only girl I've ever wanted to kiss," he replied.

"Surely, other girls have certainly noticed you," Padme smiled. Anakin blushed.

"I guess, but you already stole my heart the day you walked into Watto's shop," Anakin replied. She leaned in and kissed him softly and he eagerly returned it. After that, they turned playful and started chasing each other through the meadow. Anakin decided to try and impress Padme by riding on one of the shaaks grazing in the meadow. Padme laughed and watched, as he struggled to keep his balance, while the shaak tried to buck him off. The shaak soon succeeded, sending Anakin crashing to the grass. Padme laughed, but her smile faded quickly, as she saw Anakin struggle to get up and fall back into the grass. Concern washed over her features, as she quickly ran to his side.

"Ani, Ani, are you all right?" she asked, as she knelt down beside him and turned him over, only to see his face dance with laughter. Padme huffed and smacked him on the chest, before he pulled her down and they started rolling around in the grass. Their laughter quieted, as they stopped rolling, realizing that their faces were only inches apart. Padme leaned down and brushed her lips against his. Slowly, the kiss deepened and both became lost in the sensations they were feeling.

Later, Anakin and Padme packed up their picnic and headed back to the house. It was getting close to dinner time and Padme had gone

to change, leaving Anakin to explore the vast lake house. He encountered Sev in the sitting room. He was standing in the doorway, leaning against it, looking bored as usual.

"You don't seem happy with this assignment," Anakin ventured, trying to talk to him.

"Baby sitting spoiled Senators is hardly work for a Jedi," Sev grumbled.

"I'm worried about her. Someone's trying to kill her and I want to know why," Anakin said.

"Listen kid, I don't why anyone's trying to kill her. She's a politician and they can't be trusted. You'd do well to remember that. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to be doing the security rounds since it's beginning to get dark," Sev said, as he stalked off.

"Padme was right, a rock is better company than him," Anakin grumbled.

"Ani?" he heard her melodic voice call. He turned and his eyes nearly fell out of their sockets. She was wearing a tight, black dress with one strap in the center, which fastened around her neck, leaving her shoulders bare. The dressed dipped low, leaving him a tantalizing view of her cleavage. Her hair was in braid down her back and she wore a silver headband. Anakin's mouth went dry and he found himself unable to form coherent thoughts, much less words.

"You...you're so beautiful," Anakin uttered. She blushed and took his hand, leading him into the dining room. The servants brought them dinner. They offered to let Sev eat with them, but he opted to eat in the kitchen, which was just fine with Anakin and Padme.

"I'm so glad your mother is doing so well. I can't wait to see her again and meet the rest of your family," Padme said.

"Me either, they really want to meet you too. I know you and Beru will get along great. But I haven't met your family either," Anakin mentioned.

"Well since we can't leave Naboo right now, we should go see them. They've been bugging me to come home for a while now," Padme replied.

"That would be great, I'd love to meet your family," Anakin replied.

"Well, it's settled then. We'll go visit them tomorrow," Padme said, as they continued to eat.

"So is the Republic really trying to build an army?" Anakin asked. Padme sighed.

"I'm afraid so Ani. All negotiations with the Separatists have failed. We're looking at war," Padme said sadly.

"So you think this...Count Dooku is behind the assassination attempts on your life?" Anakin asked.

"Yes, he and perhaps Nute Gunray. The Jedi don't think he's capable of murder though since he was once a Jedi," Padme replied.

"That seems a little narrow minded. Anyone that wants something bad enough will do anything to get it and will hurt anyone that stands in their way, no matter who they are. I learned that a long time ago on Tatooine," Anakin said. Padme nodded, agreeing with him. They finished their dinner, as they continue to talk about their families.

Obi-Wan arrived on Kamino. He pulled his hood over his head and was admitted inside the main complex. A tall, lanky Kaminoan approached him.

"Welcome master Jedi, we've been expecting you," the female Kaminoan spoke.

"I'm expected?" Obi-Wan questioned.

"Yes, my name is Taun We. Prime Minister Lama Su is waiting to speak to you. This way," the Kaminoan ushered. Obi-Wan had no idea what was going on, but he intended to find out. He had a bad feeling about all of this and he had a feeling it was all somehow connected to the attempts on Senator Amidala's life...

...In the next chapter, fire place confessions and more romance ahead. Plus, Obi-Wan begins to discover some very disturbing things on Kamino...

Fireplace Confessions

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars. Nor do I own the lyrics to the song, Never Gone, by BSB.

AN: Thanks for all the great reviews everyone! Enjoy the chapter!

Never Gone

Chapter 3: Fireplace Confessions

After dinner, Anakin and Padme retired to the sitting room before the roaring fireplace. The room was lit only by the fire and they curled up on the couch together. Padme rested her head against his shoulder and enjoyed the feeling of his arms around her. Anakin looked down at the woman in his arms with something akin to awe. He didn't know what he had done to deserve her, but he never wanted to let her go. He was in love with her and he realized that this was the perfect setting to tell her how he felt.

"Padme?" he asked. She lifted her head from his shoulder and turned to face him, as he took her hands in his.

"What is it Ani?" she asked. He reached up and caressed her cheek softly.

"You're so beautiful. Do you know how amazingly beautiful you are?" he questioned. Padme blushed and looked down.

"Ani," she protested.

"That was the first thing I thought, all those years ago. I knew you had to be an angel. Only an angel could be that beautiful. From the moment I first met you, all those years ago, not a day has gone by when I haven't thought of you. And now that I'm with you again, I never want to be apart from you. I...I love you Padme, I always have. And I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I...I don't have much

to offer you. I know you probably have tons of suitors lined up. They can probably offer you wealth and prestigious names. All I can offer you is my heart and my undying love for you. And the promise that I'll cherish you forever and spend the rest of my life trying to make you happy," Anakin confessed. By now, Padme was trying very hard to keep the tears from falling down her cheeks.

"Oh Anakin, your love is all I'll ever want or need. Wealth and family names mean nothing to me, but you mean everything to me. You always have, ever since I met you. I love you too Anakin," Padme confessed, thoughtfully twirling the charm bracelet around her wrist. One of the charms on it caught Anakin's attention.

"You still have this?" Anakin asked, as he examined the japor snippet that was attached to the bracelet.

"Of course I do Ani, it's very special to me. Like you," she replied, as she kissed his cheek.

"I truly, deeply, love you Anakin," she told him, as she gazed into his eyes. Anakin lowered his lips on to hers and kissed her gently.

"Padme..." Anakin said nervously.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Will you...will you marry me?" Anakin stuttered. This time, she couldn't stop the tears from falling. She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately.

"Yes, I'll marry you," she said, as she broke the embrace momentarily. Anakin smiled and resumed kissing her over and over again. Their kisses became more heated, as the passion between them began to surface. It overwhelmed their senses, taking control. They broke the long, heated kiss. Both breathed in air with ragged gasps, as they pressed their foreheads together, their lips red and swollen. Padme smiled and giggled a little. Anakin smiled.

"What?" he asked.

"You're an amazing kisser for someone who's never kissed anyone before," she giggled. He blushed slightly.

"Well, you're not so bad yourself. Besides, kissing someone as beautiful as you isn't exactly hard," he retorted.

"You're sweet," she replied. Her face fell slightly into a frown and Anakin looked at her with concern.

"What is it Padme?" he asked.

"I don't know, I guess the reality is starting to catch up to me. A...a few days ago, when the attempts on my life were happening, I wasn't really too worried. All that mattered to me was doing my duty to the Republic," Padme said.

"And now?" Anakin asked. She smiled slightly.

"Since the moment you walked back into my life, I've realized how much was missing from that life of duty. I've finally found love...and I guess now I'm afraid," she replied.

"Afraid of what angel?" he asked, as he stroked her cheek. She blushed slightly, as he called her that.

"I'm afraid that we'll be torn apart...if another attempt on my life is successful," Padme replied, as a few tears escaped her eyes. Anakin gently wiped them and pulled her into his arms.

"I won't let anything happen to you Padme. I couldn't bare to lose you," Anakin said in her ear, as she buried her face in his chest. She looked up at him and he pressed a tender kiss to her lips.

"No harm will come to you Padme, I promise," he told her. Padme hugged him tightly and they stayed that way for a long while. Reluctantly, they broke the embrace, as it began to get late.

"We should get some sleep if we're going to see my parents tomorrow," Padme said. Anakin nodded and escorted Padme to her room, where they parted with a goodnight kiss. Anakin went into the room next to hers and retired for the night.

The next morning, Anakin was up at sunrise. He was used to getting up very early on the moisture farm and it had become a habit. He heard soft footsteps behind him and turned to see Padme, clad in a silk, white nightgown and a blue corded robe. He smiled at her.

"You're up early," Anakin said.

"I'm usually up by this time getting ready for early morning meetings," Padme replied. She wrapped her arms around him and gave him a soft kiss.

Later, Anakin was waiting for Padme to finish getting ready and come join him for breakfast. Soon, he heard her voice in the kitchen. She was talking with someone and she sounded upset. He quickly went to see what was wrong.

"I am sorry milady, but we cannot change our location without approval from the Jedi Council," Sev insisted.

"Well, you had better get approval. We're going to my parents' house for the day and we'll be returning here this evening. Anakin and I have something very important to tell them," Padme insisted.

"I'm sorry Senator, but you must remain here until further notice from the Jedi Council. Master Kenobi has yet to find the one behind the assassination attempts on your life," Sev replied.

"Master Urkin, I assure you that going to visit my parents will be very safe. I've kept my personal life very secret in order to protect them. Not many know much about my family," Padme insisted.

"Yes, but they live rather close to Theed and it is not safe," Sev argued.

"I think we'll be safe Master Urkin. It's been a very long time since Padme's seen her family," Anakin added, as he came into the kitchen and stood beside Padme.

"I am in charge of security boy and I will decide where we go and where we stay. Now, if there is anymore discussion, I may be forced to contact the temple and tell them that you need another executive order telling you to do what I tell you," Sev barked. Padme grit her teeth and then quickly quelled her temper, before storming off. It had taken years for Anakin to learn to keep his temper under control like Padme. In his early teen years, he was notorious for losing his temper and even got into a few fights because of it. So, Shmi began to come up with creative ways to teach Anakin not to act on his anger, for she knew that he would always regret doing or saying anything he did in anger. For every time Anakin lost his temper, he was given a chore that his mother knew that he particularly hated. After Anakin built up enough chores, he began to realize that learning to control his temper was much easier than spending hours doing menial tasks instead of working in his garage, where he wanted to be. But now, this guy was pushing it. He didn't like they way the Jedi spoke down to him, but he really didn't like the way he spoke to Padme. Giving the Jedi a hard stare, Anakin left to find Padme.

"Padme?" Anakin called, as he stepped out onto the veranda. He found her by the railing, where they had shared their first kiss.

"Angel, are you okay?" he asked, as he put a hand on her shoulder.

"I'm fine Ani, just frustrated with this whole situation," Padme replied.

"I know. Do you think your family would come up here for the day if you asked them to? We can tell them that we're engaged at lunch and then we can spend the whole day with them here," Anakin suggested. Padme smiled and gave him a tender kiss.

"That's a great idea Ani, I'll go call them right now," she said, as he went to use the holocom. She came back about ten minutes later with a big smile on her face and she wrapped her arms around Anakin's neck.

"They're coming! They'll be here in a couple hours. I told them you were here and they can't wait to meet you," she smiled, as he dark curls, which were held back by a blue headband, swayed in the breeze.

"I can't wait to meet them either," Anakin replied.

Two hours later, Anakin and Padme waited by the dock to greet the Naberrie family. Anakin was secretly nervous about meeting them. What if they thought he wasn't good enough for their Padme? What if they didn't like the idea of her marrying someone who used to be a slave. A dozen other ridiculous ideas ran through his head, until he felt Padme squeeze his hand.

"They're going to love you Ani, don't worry so much," Padme said. Anakin's mouth dropped open.

"How did you know what I was thinking?" Anakin asked. She giggled.

"Because I know you. When you're nervous, you fidget and run your hands through your hair. You keep fidgeting with your belt and you just ran your hands through your hair three times in the last five minutes. Relax baby," she said, as she wrapped her arms around his waist and kissed him passionately for a moment.

"You're amazing. I have to be the luckiest man in the galaxy," Anakin replied, as she broke the kiss. Padme smiled and was going to kiss him again, but a female voice interrupted their tender embrace.

"Padme!" Jobal Naberrie exclaimed.

"Mom!" Padme said, as she ran to hug her mother.

"Oh, we've missed you so much Padme," Jobal said.

"I know mom, I've missed all of you too," Padme said.

"Well, there's my youngest daughter. It's about time you came home," Ruwee Naberrie said from behind.

"Daddy!" Padme exclaimed, as she hugged him. They broke the hug and Padme hugged Sola next.

"I've missed you little sister," Sola said.

"I've missed you too," she replied. She released Sola's hand and walked over to Anakin, taking both his hands in hers. She led him over to her family.

"Mom, dad, Sola, this is Anakin Skywalker," Padme introduced.

"It's wonderful to meet you Anakin," Jobal said, shaking his hand.

"It's wonderful to meet you too Ms. Naberrie," Anakin said.

"Good to meet you Anakin," Ruwee said, shaking his hand.

"It's nice to meet you too sir," Anakin replied. Sola was next and she decided that a handshake was not enough. Instead, she hugged him. Anakin smiled and hugged back, taking this as a gesture of immediate acceptance.

"It's nice to meet you Anakin. Padme has told me all about you," Sola smiled. Anakin blushed a little.

"Where are Darred and the girls?" Padme asked.

"He took them to visit his parents for a few days," she replied.

"Well, lunch should be ready, so how about we go eat," Padme suggested.

"Sounds good to me. It'll give us all a chance to talk and get to know you a little better Anakin," Jobal said.

"So Anakin, Padme tells us that you're excellent at fixing things," Ruwee said. Anakin glanced at Padme and smiled.

"Yes sir," Anakin replied.

"I have this trusty old speeder that I'm about ready to scrap. I really love that old speeder, but no mechanic will touch her. Padme insists that you could fix it," Ruwee said.

"I would love to give it a look," Anakin replied. Ruwee smiled. So far, he really liked this boy. That Jedi Knight that was guarding his daughter was a different story, however. He remained silent in the corner of the room with a frown on his face. Padme glanced at Anakin for a moment and he nodded.

"Anakin and I have something to tell all of you," Padme announced.

"What is it Padme?" Jobal asked. Anakin gave her a half smile and she smiled back.

"Anakin and I are engaged," Padme beamed. Sola and Jobal broke into grins and were immediately out of their seats hugging both Padme and Anakin. Ruwee smiled and patted Anakin on the back.

After lunch, the women went into the kitchen, while Ruwee and Anakin continued to talk.

"Master Jedi, do you mind if I ask you a few questions?" Ruwee said.

"Go ahead," Sev replied, his voice devoid of any emotion.

"I am very concerned for my daughter's safety. I believe the situation is more serious than she is letting on," Ruwee said.

"There have been two assassination attempts. Master Obi-Wan Kenobi is leading the investigation. All other information is classified," Sev replied.

"I am her father, I would like to know," Ruwee insisted.

"I'm sorry mister Naberrie, but I can't divulge anymore information. Now, if you'll excuse me," Sev said, as he left the room.

"I didn't get much out of him either. It's like talking to a stump," Anakin said. Ruwee chuckled.

"I think I would prefer the stump," Ruwee joked. Anakin laughed.

"I had that speeder towed. What do you say we go look at it?" Ruwee said.

"Sounds great," Anakin said, as he followed Ruwee outside.

"I can't believe it, you're finally going to get married. We wondered if we were ever going to see this day," Sola said.

"I know, I'm still adjusting to the feeling. It happened so fast, but I love him so much," Padme replied.

"Well, that's all that matters little sister. And it's obvious he loves you. I can tell just by the way he looks at you. And he certainly is nice to look at," Sola giggled, as Padme blushed.

"He is handsome, isn't he?" Padme smiled.

"Oh definitely little sister. You're a lucky woman," Sola said. Padme nodded with a smile, in complete agreement.

Something was wrong...very, very wrong with this picture. That's what was running through Obi-Wan Kenobi's mind, as he watched the clones go through their daily regimented programming. This was

so very wrong. An army for the Republic commissioned by a Jedi. It certainly sounded preposterous, but he sensed no deception from the Kaminoans. What they were telling him was true, or at least they truly believed what they told him was true. He was very interested in meeting this Jango Fett. He quietly followed Taun We, who was taking him to do just that...

"There's a Jedi here, you need to leave. Tyrannus has informed me that the Senator is on her home planet of Naboo. Don't fail this time Zam," Jango ordered. She nodded and took her leave. Zam had failed in her attempt to kill Amidala last time, but she would not fail this time. She had almost been caught by Kenobi, but she was able to easily evade the other Jedi that was with him. Zam Wessel boarded her ship and left Kamino setting her coordinates for Naboo...

Listening to the Force

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars.

AN: Here's chapter 4! Enjoy and please review!

Never Gone

Chapter 4: Listening to the Force

Padme stood in the doorway of the small garage at their lake house. Anakin slid out from under the speeder and wiped his grease covered hands on a rag that Ruwee had tossed him.

"That should do it Mr. Naberrie. See if she'll turn over," Anakin said. Ruwee pressed the ignition switch and the engine turned over easily. The engine now sounded smooth and quiet, as if it were brand new. Ruwee looked up at Anakin in amazement and then laughed merrily. He gave Anakin a sound pat on the back.

"I've never seen anyone work magic like that on a piece of machinery before," Ruwee said.

"I told you that Ani could fix anything, daddy," Padme said, as she came up to Anakin and kissed his cheek.

"Sola and I are going down to the beach. Do you want to come?" Padme asked.

"Sure," he replied.

"I'll find you a pair of swim trunks and put them in your room. Then you can meet us down there," she said, as she kissed his cheek and went back up to the house.

Padme rubbed some sun oil on her arms, as she and Sola sat on their beach towels. Padme stood up, ready to get in the water.

"Aren't you coming in? The water feels perfect this time of day," Padme said.

"No, I'm going to try and get some color. Besides, I think you'll have more fun with Anakin," Sola said, as she pointed behind her. Padme turned, only to see Anakin clad in only a pair of black swim trunks. Padme observed him, as he walked toward her. She couldn't tear her eyes away from the lean, gorgeous muscles that rippled throughout his arms, chest and torso. Smooth, perfectly tanned skin covered his body and she hadn't even realized she was staring.

"Careful little sister, you might catch flies," Sola joked, not even looking up from her book. Padme snapped her jaw shut and glared back at her older sister. Sola was enjoying her teasing way too much.

"It doesn't look like you're the only one that's enjoying the view. You're white bikini is having quite the effect on him. I think the poor boy's swim trunks are getting a little tight," Sola teased, thoroughly enjoying her sister's discomfort. Padme gaped at her older sister.

"Sola! You're terrible!" Padme scolded.

"Oh please, like you weren't undressing him with your eyes, miss prim and proper senator," Sola replied, again not even looking up from her book. Padme gave her sister another glare, before turning back to Anakin, who was now right in front of her.

"I was just about to go for a swim. Care to join me?" Padme asked.

"Of course," he replied, as they joined hands and trudged into the water. Being from a desert planet, Anakin was enjoying the water immensely, as he and Padme waded together.

"I've never seen so much water in one place. Usually, I'm swimming in sand," Anakin said, as he waded in the water.

"Come on, sand is not so bad," Padme replied. Anakin gave her an incredulous look.

"Trying being up to your neck in it every day," Anakin laughed in reply.

"The sand isn't what bothers me about your planet, it's the awful heat," Padme replied.

"You get used to the heat. I suppose I should be used to the sand, but it's course and rough. And it get everywhere," Anakin complained, as he moved closer to her.

"Not like here. Here, everything is so soft and smooth," Anakin said, as he caressed her cheek. Padme leaned in and captured his lips in a hungry kiss. With lips locked in a passionate embrace, Padme snaked her arms around his neck and pressed herself closer to him.

"Careful you two, don't forget to breath!" Sola shouted teasingly. Anakin and Padme pulled apart and blushed, having completely forgotten about Sola.

"She's enjoying this way too much," Padme said. Anakin smirked devilishly.

"Well, let's get her back," he replied. He pointed at Sola who now had turned on her stomach to tan her back.

Anakin retrieved a couple buckets that were laying in the sand nearby. He and Padme filled them up and quietly tiptoed over to where Sola lay. Suddenly, Sola noticed two shadows over her. She started to turn over. As she did, Anakin and Padme dumped the water on her, drenching her from head to toe. Sola screamed, as Anakin and Padme laughed. A soaking wet Sola glared at them both.

"Oh, you two are dead!" she yelled, as she chased them back into the lake. That began a splashing war between them. They were so involved in drenching each other, that they didn't notice Ruwee and Jobal standing on the beach, calling to them. When they finally did hear them, they turned, accidentally sending a wave of water at the two older Naberrie's. They even managed to get Sev, who was standing nearby. Anakin, Padme, and Sola all covered their mouths with their hands, as they realized what had happened. Ruwee began to chuckle and Jobal joined him. Anakin, Padme and Sola all burst out laughing. Sev, however, did not find it funny at all, as he stomped off to go dry off.

After drying off, the Naberrie's said goodbye to their youngest daughter and her new fiancé and left for home. Padme felt happier and more excited than she had, well...ever. As soon as this whole mess with the attempts on her life were over, she, her mother, and Sola would begin planning her wedding to Anakin. Padme also couldn't wait to go to Tatooine to tell Anakin's family, for she wanted Shmi to also help in planning her son's wedding. She knew Shmi would be beyond thrilled. After they saw the Naberrie's off, they went to dry off and change for dinner. Their swimming excursion had made them both quite hungry.

After a romantic, candlelight dinner, Anakin and Padme stood together on the veranda, just enjoying the feeling of being in each others arms. Anakin stood behind her, with his arms wrapped around her waist. Soft music played in the background and they slowly swayed together, as the cool, soft breeze ruffled their hair and clothes. Both sipped their Nabooan wine slowly. Anakin chuckled, as he continued to nuzzle her neck

"What are you laughing at?" she asked playfully.

"Does your foot still hurt?" Anakin asked.

"It's fine Ani," she replied.

"You must think I'm the worst dancer in the galaxy," he replied.

"Not at all. You caught on very fast once you got the hang of it. The galaxy waltz is not an easy dance," she replied. She sighed contentedly, as she felt chill bumps rise on her skin, as Anakin kissed the nape of her neck. She leaned her head back against his shoulder as he continued to kiss her slowly and sensually. Suddenly, Anakin jerked his head up, his eyes darting around in the dark sky.

"Ani, what is it?" Padme asked, concern washing over her face. The Force often spoke to Anakin, despite the fact that he had no Jedi training. The Force had always imparted to him strongly, as long as he could remember, even before he knew what it was. That was why Qui-Gon had insisted so strongly that he be trained. Ever since returning to Tatooine, the Force spoke to him from time to time, mostly when there was danger near or when he was feeling angry or depressed. The voice that spoke to him had sounded like Qui-Gon since he returned to Tatooine and Anakin was convinced that it was Qui-Gon. At first, Anakin had been very angry and had told the voice to stop speaking to him. It had taken his mother a long time to help him accept what had happened to Qui-Gon and what had happened later, when he was rejected by the Jedi a second time. Over time, Anakin realized that it was really for the best that he did not become a Jedi. He would have felt suffocated by all their rules and code. He would have never been allowed to see his mother again and he would have never been allowed to be with Padme. And that wouldn't have worked for Anakin at all. His mother told him that when Qui-Gon spoke to him through the Force that he should listen, for Qui-Gon cared deeply for him and was very wise. His mother had said that if the dead were speaking to him that he had better listen and so he started listening.

"Ani?" Padme asked again.

"Something's not right, you're in danger," Anakin said, as he drew the blaster from it's holster on his belt. He rarely let it out of his sight living on Tatooine and once he had learned of the danger that Padme was in, he had immediately retrieved it from his travel case.

"Anakin, you're scaring me," Padme said. By now, Sev had appeared and was observing their surroundings.

"I don't sense anything," Sev said.

"Then you're not listening," Anakin replied.

"Listen kid, I don't know what you *think* you are sensing, but you are not a Jedi. I think I would know if there was danger a little better than you," Sev retorted. But Anakin didn't hear him, for he was too busy listening to the Force.

" *His arrogance clouds his vision young one, it is truly sad how blind some of us have become. There is danger heading for you," Qui-Gon spoke.*

" *What do I do master Qui-Gon. I can't let anyone hurt Padme," Anakin spoke back, silently.*

" *Listen to the Force young one, it will never lead you wrong," Qui-Gon spoke back.*

Anakin's eyes snapped open, as he grabbed Padme around the waist and suddenly hauled her to the ground, as an assassin scaled over the balcony of the veranda. Padme screamed, as Zam Wessel's blaster fired, clipping Anakin's shoulder. He cried out in pain momentarily, before suppressing the pain to the back of his mind. Padme cried out with him, realizing that he had taken the blast meant for her. Sev was now blocking her blaster bolts with his emerald bladed light saber. Realizing that she would need to choose another opportunity, Zam quickly hopped over the balcony and began to escape. Anakin watched as Sev attempted to do nothing.

"What are you doing! She's getting away!" Anakin yelled.

"I won't be able to catch her. It is best I meditate on this and be ready for her next time," Sev reasoned. Anakin's jaw clenched.

"There won't be a next time, I'm taking her down now. Stay with Padme!" Anakin yelled at him, as he jumped over the railing and ran off after her. Anakin let the Force flow around him and carry him as he ran after her. Zam was astounded when she realized that the boy, not the Jedi, was following her. And he was fast, must faster than any normal human could move. Zam jumped on a water speeder and began to speed away. Anakin stopped and aimed his blaster at the engines and fired. The speeder exploded and Zam cried out in pain as she was thrown from it and back onto the beach. Anakin sprinted over to her and pointed his blaster at her.

"Don't move," he ordered. Zam snarled at him, her face quickly shifting to her true clawdite form and then back to her human form.

"You wouldn't kill me kid, you don't have the guts," Zam taunted.

"You tried to kill the woman I love, so don't put it past me. The only reason you're still alive is because I want answers," Anakin replied, as he hauled her to her feet and marched her back to the house. As Anakin arrived back, Sev was stunned that he had managed to catch the assassin. Sev placed Zam in a pair of stun cuffs and then escorted into the house where they would now have to contact the council.

"Anakin! You're hurt!" Padme said frantically, as she began examining his shoulder.

"I'm fine, it's just grazed my shoulder," he replied, as she took her hands in his own. He leaned down and kissed her passionately for a long moment.

"Come on, we should get in there. I want to make sure master Yoda and master Windu know how ineffective their Jedi Knight has been. You saved my life Ani," Padme said, as she kissed him again.

"I told you that I would never let anything happen to you," he replied. She smiled and joined hands with him.

"I'm going to get you a bacta patch after we meet with the council for your shoulder," Padme said. Anakin smiled.

"It's fine Padme," he replied.

"It *still* needs a bacta patch," she replied in a tone that bore no argument...

Meeting with the Council

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars. It all belongs to George.

AN: Here's chapter 5! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 5: Meeting with the Council

"Senator Amidala, good it is to see you," master Yoda spoke, as he and Mace Windu both bowed. Their shimmering holograms shown to full size in the sitting room. Fingers still laced with Anakin's, she bowed to them in return.

"Captured the assassin you have Knight Urkin?" Yoda asked. Sev lowered his head in shame.

"No master, it was not I that caught her," Sev admitted.

"Masters, this is my fiancé, Anakin Skywalker. I trust that you remember him. Anakin saved my life from the assassin and captured her," Padme said. Yoda and Mace exchanged surprised looks.

"Accomplish this, how young Skywalker?" Master Yoda asked.

"I felt the danger to Padme and was able to get her out of the way in time. Then, I went after the assassin," Anakin replied.

"Master Urkin, sense danger did you not?" Yoda asked.

"No master, I did not sense it," Sev admitted shamefully.

"Obi-Wan has discovered that Jango Fett is behind the assassination attempts on your life Senator. He has tracked him to Geonosis and we were sending him there. But in light of these events, I believe we shall send Obi-Wan to relieve Sev," Mace said.

"Master, I assure you that I can complete the mission," Sev argued.

"Decide that we will. Speak to you we shall in a few moments. Escort the assassin back to Coruscant and into our custody you will," Yoda said.

"Master Kenobi will be informed of the situation immediately and should arrive on Naboo sometime tomorrow. I will be going to deal with Fett myself on Geonosis. But I feel Naboo might not be safe anymore. We must relocate you when Obi-Wan arrives," Mace said.

"If I may make a suggestion masters?" Anakin spoke. Mace and Yoda nodded.

"Padme would be safe at my family's home on Tatooine. We live on a moisture farm in the desert that is miles from the cities," Anakin suggested. Mace and Yoda exchanged glances.

"Very well Anakin. We will inform Master Kenobi that he shall escort you to Tatooine for the Senator's protection.

"Thank you masters," Padme replied.

"Injured you are young Skywalker," Yoda said.

"I was just about to patch up his wound master Yoda, if you'll excuse us," Padme said. Yoda and Mace nodded and bowed to her, as she and Anakin left them to deal with Sev.

"Much to talk about we will have once you return, knight Urkin," Yoda said.

"Masters, I implore you to let me finish this assignment," Sev pleaded.

"Not happy with this assignment you were. Clouded your judgement was and not able to sense danger you were. Lucky you were, that young Skywalker was there to protect the Senator. Very important

she is the Senate. Many senators, corrupt they are. But not Amidala, very strong ally to us she is," Yoda scolded.

"I'm sorry master," Sev bowed his head in shame.

"You will leave for Coruscant with the prisoner when Obi-Wan arrives in the morning," Mace ordered sternly, deeply disappointed in his former padawan.

"Discuss this more upon your return, we will," Yoda said, as their hologram blinked out. Sev secured Zam in a room and sat down to meditate, but never letting his senses leave the tricky assassin.

Padme made Anakin sit down on her bed, while she went to the fresher for some bacta patches. She returned quickly and lifted Anakin's shirt over his head. She observed the charred flesh on his shoulder and was grateful it wasn't more serious than it was.

"Oh Ani," she said, as she pressed the bacta patch to his wound. He hissed a bit, as the bacta made contact.

"It's fine angel, it's not that serious," he insisted.

"I know, it's just that it could have been and I don't know what I'd do if I lost you. We just found each other again and..." she ranted, but he stopped her and put a finger to her lips, before silencing her with a kiss. Anakin angled his mouth over hers, deepening the passionate embrace. Padme felt a warmth spread through her body, as he moved his lips to the nape of her neck. She pulled herself up and straddled his lap without breaking the kiss. She began to slowly undo his belt, causing him to look up into her eyes.

"Padme...are you sure?" he asked. She looked deep into his eyes, her own lit with desire for him.

"I love you Anakin and I want to be with you, forever," she said, as she kissed him again. As his lips moved over hers, he reached

around and unzipped the back of her dress and slowly slipped it down her slender frame. His eyes took in her beauty, as he lowered her to the bed. The unbridled passion between them surfaced and consumed them, melding them together as one...

Mace Windu and Yoda sat quietly in Yoda's meditation chamber.

"Perhaps it was a mistake to turn Anakin away from the order," Mace said.

"No, the right thing we did for Skywalker," Yoda replied.

"How can you be sure? If he is that powerful, then we could use him," Mace said.

"Happy he is with the Senator and his family. Right decision it was for his mother to finish raising him. Clouded his future, no longer is. Strong in the Force he is, powerful he could be. But draw attention he would to himself and his family and seek him out the Sith Lord would. No, train him we will not. Imparts naturally to him the Force does and the chosen one he still may be," Yoda said, after hours of meditation on the boy.

"But how can he bring balance to the Force if he has not been properly trained?" Mace asked.

"Know this I do not, but guiding him Qui-Gon's spirit has been. Watching over the boy he is. And watch him I will too, but let him lead his life as he pleases we will. Adapt to our code, he could not," Yoda replied. Mace nodded in understanding.

The early morning sun's rays streamed through the blinds in Padme's room. Padme whimpered, as the light caught her eye. She lay spooned against Anakin and she rolled away from the light, snuggling deeper into his arms. She propped her head up on his chest and inhaled his now familiar scent. Normally, she was an early

riser, but today she wanted nothing more than to stay in bed with her future husband. She blinked her eyes open and looked up at his peaceful, sleeping face. She smiled, thinking about how handsome he was. Last night had been nothing short of amazing, as they gave themselves to each other. They had only been asleep for a few hours now, as their passion and thirst for each other had lasted well into the night. She nibbled a little at the nape of his neck and his collarbone. She let her hand travel over his defined pectorals and his chiseled abs. Anakin smiled, as he slowly opened his eyes.

"This has got to be the best way I've ever woke up," he chuckled. She giggled and kissed him tenderly.

"Good morning, my love," Padme replied.

"Morning angel," he replied, as he kissed her again. He rolled over and buried his face in her curly brown locks, while kissing her neck.

"Mm...Ani, didn't you get enough last night?" she giggled. She heard a muffled response that sounded like a no and she giggled again. He looked up at her and she held his face in her hands.

"Neither did I," she replied. He gave her one of his roguish smiles, before descending on her swollen lips again.

Obi-Wan Kenobi allowed himself to take in the beauty of Naboo, as he rode in the water speeder, which was taking him to Senator Amidala's lake home. His battle with Jango Fett had ended with the bounty hunter getting away, but not before Obi-Wan managed to attach a tracking device to the hull of the ship. Then he had contacted the council to wait for further orders. He had expected them to send him after Jango Fett, but to his surprise, it seemed that Sev had failed in his mission to protect the Senator. Zam Wessel had made another attempt on her life and he was intrigued to hear that her life was saved by Anakin who was now engaged to the Senator. Obi-Wan smiled slightly. Since the day that they had rejected Anakin, he had wondered if they had made the right decision. And now, it

seemed that Master Yoda had been right to send the boy back to his mother. He was looking forward to seeing them both. The lake palace came into view and the driver docked it. Obi-Wan stepped off and was met by four people. As they came into view, Obi-Wan recognized two of them to be Sev and a restrained Zam Wessel.

"Hello Master Kenobi," Sev greeted stiffly.

"Hello Sev, the prison transport is leaving in one hour and Zam is to be aboard. There is a star fighter waiting for you at the palace in Theed to take you back to Coruscant," Obi-Wan said. With a frown, Sev nodded, as he and Zam boarded the water speeder and headed back to Theed. Obi-Wan was met by two more figures and as they came into view, Obi-Wan recognized one to be Senator Amidala. He regarded the man standing next to her with a bit of disbelief. He knew it was Anakin, but it was hard to believe how much he had grown, even though it had been ten years. Gone was the little boy and standing in his place was a young man that stood at about 6'1", a good few inches over Obi-Wan's head. His sandy blonde hair was shaggy and golden streaked, probably due to the suns on his home planet. Indeed, Anakin had certainly grown up and Obi-Wan sensed an inner peace in him that was not there ten years ago.

"Hello Obi-Wan, it's good to see you," Padme greeted.

"Hello Padme, it's good to see you too. I'm very happy to see that you're safe and I guess that's thanks to you Anakin. It's good to see you as well, you certainly have grown up," Obi-Wan said. Anakin smiled.

"It's good to see you too Obi-Wan," Anakin replied.

"My ship is out back and our things are already loaded. Artoo is waiting for us," Padme said.

"Good, it is best that we get on our way. I'm sure the news of Zam capture and your assassination attempt is all over the holonews by now. Every bounty hunter in the galaxy will know you're on Naboo,

so it's best we leave right away," Obi-Wan said. Anakin and Padme nodded. The three boarded the ship and left the atmosphere on Naboo. Anakin and Artoo prepared the ship and made the jump to hyperspace. In three hours, they would be home. Anakin smiled. He couldn't wait to tell mom and Cliegg that he was getting married to woman of his dreams...

The Homestead

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars. It all belongs to LFL.

AN: Here's chapter 6! Thanks for all the great reviews everyone!

Never Gone

Chapter 6: The Homestead

Padme's Nubian cruiser rocketed through the Tatooine atmosphere. Anakin eased up on the throttle and flew the ship to his family's moisture farm. He dropped the landing gear and set her down smoothly on the firm sand. Anakin lowered the ramp and followed Artoo down. Padme and Obi-Wan followed him, as they approached Anakin's home.

Threepio trailed behind with Artoo. It wasn't long before the two droids were bickering.

"Mom!" Anakin called, as he entered the house.

"Ani!" Shmi called, as she shuffled out of the kitchen to greet him.

"Ani, you're home sooner than expected," she said, as she kissed his cheek. He grinned when Shmi saw their company.

"Padme!" Shmi exclaimed, as she hugged her.

"It's good to see you Mrs. Lars," Padme said.

"Oh please, call me Shmi, honey. It's good to see you too and you're as beautiful as ever darling," Shmi said, making Padme blush a little.

"And who is this?" Shmi asked.

"This is Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi. He's been assigned as my Jedi protection," Padme replied. Concern washed over Shmi's face.

"Protection?" Shmi asked.

"It's a long story," Padme replied.

"Well, you can tell us all about it at dinner," Shmi said, as she turned back to the kitchen.

"Can I help you?" Padme asked.

"Sure honey," Shmi replied, as they left Obi-Wan and Anakin to their own devices. Not much later, everyone gathered for dinner where introductions were in order.

"Well, you must be Padme. Anakin has told us much about you. It's good to finally meet you," Cliegg greeted.

"Thank you, it's wonderful to meet you as well Mr. Lars," she replied.

"Call me Cliegg. This is my son Owen and his girlfriend Beru," Cliegg pointed to the young couple beside him.

"It's nice to meet you. Ani never shuts up about you, so it good to finally put a face to the name," Owen mentioned, taking the full opportunity to tease Anakin. Anakin rolled his eyes and ignored Owen's jab.

"It's good to meet you too and you also Beru," Padme replied. Padme introduced Obi-Wan, as they sat down to eat. Once everyone was mostly done eating, they sat back and waited for Padme and Anakin to tell the story.

"So Padme, why do you need Jedi protection?" Shmi asked. Padme sighed.

"Well, for about a year now, I've been working against the military creation act in the Senate. It's a bill that the Senate wants to pass in

order to create an army of the Republic to deal with the increasing number of systems that want to leave. About ten days ago, I was due to return to Coruscant for the decision on the bill, but as I was leaving Naboo, we received some threats on my life. I needed to go anyway, so we arranged for my handmaiden Corde to act as my decoy, while I flew in one of the escort ships. On the landing platform, there was an explosion on my main ship," Padme paused for a minute and Anakin laid his hand on her shoulder to comfort her. She smiled at him, before she continued.

"Corde was killed in the blast. That is when Chancellor Palpatine suggested that I be given Jedi protection. The second attempt of my life was on Coruscant again. Master Obi-Wan thwarted the assassin, but unfortunately, she got away. The chancellor then ordered that I return to Naboo with Knight Urkin for my own safety. I had just arrived on Naboo that morning when Ani arrived. We went to the lake country and that's where the third assassination attempt happened. Anakin saved me from that one and caught the assassin," Padme beamed proudly.

"Oh, my brave boy," Shmi said, as she ruffled his hair.

"Mom..." Anakin whined.

"Knight Urkin was sent back to Coruscant and Master Kenobi was sent as his replacement. Anakin suggested that I would be safe on Tatoonie, so here we are," Padme explained, as she looked at Anakin. He smiled back brightly.

"What's going on you two?" Shmi asked playfully.

"We have something else to tell you," Anakin said, as he took Padme's hand in his.

"We're getting married," Anakin announced. Shmi gasped and was immediately out of her seat and hugging her son and Padme.

"Oh, this is so wonderful," Shmi said, as she looked at them both.

"My mom and sister want you to help plan it. Would you be able to come to Naboo or Coruscant with us. I'm afraid once this whole mess with assassinations are over, I won't have much time to take off work right away. We plan on getting married on Naboo, but mom and Sola will probably come to Coruscant to help me plan it. But I would really like you to help too Shmi," Padme said.

"She wouldn't miss it for the world," Cliegg said.

"Are you sure Cliegg?" she asked.

"Of course darling, you've worked all your life. You're going to enjoy planning Anakin's wedding," Cliegg said. Shmi smiled and hugged him.

"A few days before the wedding, I can come get the three of you and take you to Naboo," Anakin said.

"We want to make it in one piece Anakin," Owen joked.

"Haha," Anakin replied, as he rolled his eyes.

"Oh, since the day Ani met you Padme, I knew you would become my daughter someday," Shmi said, as she hugged Padme.

"And now, I won't have to wait on Owen for grandchildren, because goodness knows, he's certainly wasting time. He should have proposed to Beru ages ago," Shmi said. Owen turned red with embarrassment.

"MOM!" he whined, while Anakin laughed at his expense. Owen playfully shoved him and Anakin shoved back.

"Outside with the roughhousing boys," Shmi ordered.

After dinner, Shmi, Owen and Beru continued to talk, so Anakin decided to show Obi-Wan around his shop.

Anakin listened avidly to Obi-Wan stories of missions that he had been on, while he tinkered with a broken vaporator.

"Anakin, I want to apologize to you. I wasn't very nice to you all those years ago," Obi-Wan said.

"Don't worry about it. It was probably for the best. I probably would have felt suffocated by your Jedi code. It definitely wouldn't have allowed me to marry Padme or see my mom and that just wouldn't have worked for me," Anakin admitted.

"Well, I'm glad there are no hard feelings," Obi-Wan replied.

"There you are," Padme said, as she came in the shop.

"Cliegg and Owen are shutting down the power, so we should all get inside," Padme said, as she came over to Anakin.

"I'll see you two inside," Obi-Wan said, as he left them. Padme leaned up and kissed him softly. Anakin pulled her into his arms and deepened the kiss.

"Did you have fun talking with my mom and Beru?" he asked.

"I did. I love them both already, just like I knew I would. And your mom told me some very interesting stories about you," Padme said playfully.

"Oh great," Anakin replied in disdain. They walked out of the garage and into the cool night air. The twin suns had set and the moon showed brightly now. The stars illuminated the sky, unobstructed by any clouds.

"Oh wow, what a view. I always miss looking at the stars when I'm on Coruscant. You can't see them hardly and I never seem to get enough time to just look at the stars on Naboo," Padme said.

"Well, I think we should start a tradition then. I'll go get a blanket from mom. It gets a little cold after the suns set, so I'll grab our

cloak," Anakin said.

"Or you could just keep me warm," Padme replied slyly. He smiled roguishly.

"Yeah, I can do that," he replied, as he turned to go get a blanket. He came back out and spread the blanket out. Anakin laid down on his back and motioned for Padme to come. She did so, eagerly cuddling close to him, and resting her head on his chest.

"Where's Naboo?" she asked. Anakin studied the stars for a moment and then pointed at the bright star off to the west.

"That one right there. And that one over there is Dantooine and that one is Corellia," Anakin said, as he pointed at two bright stars south and east of them.

"I used to come out here with mom all the time when we first moved here with Cliegg. Master Qui-Gon gave me his star chart the first time he took me to the temple as a gift," Anakin recalled fondly.

"I'd spend hours studying the sky until mom would drag me inside and make me go to bed," Anakin chuckled at the memory.

"Anakin, are you sure you're okay with me continuing my career?" Padme asked.

"Of course angel, if that's what you want. Besides, this galaxy needs good people like you," Anakin replied.

"You won't mind going back and forth between Coruscant, Naboo, and Tatooine?" she asked. He chuckled and shifted his body so that they were facing each other.

"Angel, if I spend the rest of my life following you around the stars, I'll die a happy man," he gave her that half smile that she loved. Padme wanted to melt at that moment, as his sapphire eyes gazed lovingly at her.

"Oh Ani, I love you so much," she said.

"I love you too angel," Anakin replied, as he kissed her hungrily. Padme pressed her body against his, as she surrendered in his strong embrace. Anakin moved his lips passionately over hers. Eventually the temperature dropped considerably and the two young lovers went inside for the night...

Jedi Master Mace Windu landed outside what seemed to be air vents of some kind. Steam billowed heavily from the vents, indicating that a factory of some kind existed here. And Mace had a good idea of what they were producing. He flipped on the transmitting beacon switch on so that the temple would be able to locate him if they needed to. Cautiously, he then made his way inside the structure. He knew danger awaited him inside the fortress, but confident Jedi master believed it was nothing he could not handle...

The next morning, Anakin trudged sleeping into the kitchen, desperately in need of his morning caf. Padme was already up helping his mother with breakfast, as Beru had gone home last night.

"Good morning handsome," she said, as she greeted him with a soft kiss.

"Morning," he replied, with a yawn. She giggled and handed him a fresh cup of caf.

"Thanks babe," he replied, as he sipped carefully at the hot liquid. He sat down at the table with Owen, Cliegg and Obi-Wan.

"Were you able to fix that evaporator?" Cliegg asked.

"I should be able to, but I need to go see if Watto has the part I need today," Anakin replied. Cliegg chuckled.

"Well, I have yet to see the day where there's something that you can't fix," Cliegg said. Anakin smiled at the compliment, as he popped a piece of fruit in his mouth.

"Padme, this Shuura fruit you brought us is wonderful," Shmi said, as she took a bite.

"Thanks, it's my favorite too. Whenever I leave Naboo, I always be sure to pack plenty in my ship's cooler," Padme replied. Anakin finished his breakfast quickly and stoop up.

"I should start out for Mos Espa before it's too late in the day," Anakin said.

"I'll come with you," Padme replied. He smiled apologetically.

"Sorry angel, but Mos Espa is way too dangerous for you," Anakin replied.

"Please Ani? I'll stay close to you and I'll keep the hood up on my cloak," Padme pleaded, her chocolate eyes pleading with him.

"I'm afraid I have to agree with Anakin. It would be much too dangerous," Obi-Wan replied.

"Well, I'm sure I would be perfectly safe with Ani. But you can come with us," Padme said, as she ended the conversation and went to change. Cliegg chuckled.

"You're going to have your hands full with that one, Anakin," Cliegg chuckled.

"Yeah, she's already got you whipped," Owen joked. Anakin rolled his eyes.

"Like you're one to talk Owen. If Beru told you to jump, you'd ask her how high," Anakin shot back. Cliegg and Obi-Wan enjoyed a laugh at the boys' expense.

Anakin, Padme and Obi-Wan climbed into the speeder.

"You know Senator, I don't feel this is a very good idea," Obi-Wan said.

"It'll be fine Obi-Wan. And I told you to call me Padme," she replied. Obi-Wan looked pointedly at Anakin.

"Don't look at me. I gave up trying to argue with her," he replied, as he started the engines. Anakin pressed down on the throttle and Obi-Wan felt his stomach lurch, as Anakin took them to hair raising speeds. He had a really bad feeling about this...

Misadventures in Mos Espa

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here, because it's fun.

AN: Here's chapter 7 of Never Gone! Thanks for all the great reviews everybody!

Never Gone

Chapter 7: Misadventures in Mos Epsa

Anakin parked the speeder outside the streets of Mos Espa. He took Padme's hand and helped her out.

"Keep that hood up, okay?" Anakin told her, as he checked to make sure his blaster had a full charge. He flipped the safety off and holstered it. He checked the other side of his blades and made sure his vibro blades were within reach.

"Anakin, is that all necessary?" Obi-Wan asked.

"You've never been to Mos Espa. Get rid of your cloak and make sure your light saber is concealed out of sight," Anakin said.

"What's wrong with my cloak?" Obi-Wan objected.

"You look like a Jedi and that will attract attention. I'll do enough of that for the both of us," Anakin replied, as he looped Padme's arm in his.

"This is a bad idea," Anakin said. The three walked to Watto's shop and went inside. Anakin nodded to her and she dropped the hood of her cloak.

"Ani!" Watto greeted.

"Hello Watto, I need a moisture inductor for one of my step dad's vaporators. Do you have one?" Anakin asked.

"Let me check in the back," Watto said, as he eyed the people with Anakin. He vaguely recognized the girl from ten years ago and he eyed the man suspiciously, before going in back. He came back a few minutes later.

"Ah, sorry Ani, I don't have any more. I sold the last one yesterday," Watto said. Anakin rolled his eyes impatiently.

"Well, how long until you have one?" Anakin asked.

"I'm getting a delivery in about two hours. Come back then," Watto said.

"And what are we supposed to do for two hours?" Anakin mumbled.

"Anakin, perhaps there is an establishment where we can rest and wait for the time to pass," Obi-Wan suggested. Anakin looked at him like he had grown bantha ears.

"I am not taking Padme into a cantina. No way," Anakin protested.

"Come on Ani, it should be fine. It's hot and I'm getting thirsty" Padme replied. Anakin checked the crono on Watto's wall. It was early enough and he might get lucky enough not to run into the usual scum.

"Fine, but stay close and don't look at *anyone* ," Anakin replied. They entered the cantina, their ears immediately having to adjust to the loud, lively music that played. A few scantily clad Twi'lek's and human women eyed Anakin lustily, as they usually did when he was unfortunate enough to come here. But he paid them no mind, as usual and quickly found a booth in the corner in an area that was rather vacant. The droid waitress asked them what they wanted and they ordered water. The Tatooine heat was in full force, as it neared noon already.

"I just hope the two hours passes quickly, so we can get out of here. I hate this place," Anakin grumbled. Padme cautiously dropped the hood on her cloak and squeezed his hand.

"Well, let's pass the time by talking about the wedding. You're going to come, aren't you Obi-Wan?" Padme asked. Obi-Wan chuckled.

"Wouldn't miss it for the world," Obi-Wan replied.

"I was thinking we could get married on the balcony at the lake house, maybe at sunset, surrounded by our families," Padme said, as she squeezed his hand. Anakin was momentarily able to forget about where they were, as he stared into her chestnut brown eyes.

"Have you two even set a date yet?" Obi-Wan asked.

"No, but I was definitely thinking about a spring wedding. That gives us about six months to plan the wedding," Padme replied.

"Sounds like it will be quite the beautiful event," Obi-Wan said, as he sipped at his water.

"Well, well, if it isn't Anakin Skywalker," a rude voice said. Anakin cringed, as he realized exactly who he hoped they wouldn't run into, was here.

"Sebulba," Anakin growled. Sebulba and his lackeys approached their table.

"Beat it Sebulba," Anakin replied.

"You know Skywalker, I don't like your attitude," Sebulba spat.

"And I don't like the way you smell," Anakin retorted. Sebulba growled, but then caught sight of Padme.

"Well, who's your...slave," Sebulba said, knowing it would strike a chord with Anakin.

"She is no slave. Stay away from her, sleamo," Anakin growled, as he stood up to face Sebulba. Anakin towered over the dug, but he didn't seem intimidated.

"Hmm...I bet she would fetch top dollar on the market," Sebulba said.

Whatever control Anakin had been exercising up until this point completely dissolved at his statement. Anakin sensed one of Sebulba's human lackeys moving around him. The man reached out and grabbed Padme's shoulder. Anakin snapped one of his vibro blades from his belt and threw it at the man's hand. It stuck him, embedding itself in his palm. He cried out in pain, as he drew his hand away. Anakin drew his blaster and pointed it at the disgusting man's head.

"Touch her again and next time, I'll shoot you," Anakin threatened. Obi-Wan stood up and began to reach under his tunic.

"No, *that* will only attract the attention of bounty hunters," Anakin said.

"And you're not?" Obi-Wan asked. Anakin chuckled.

"No, my cantina brawls with Sebulba is a regular occurrence," Anakin replied.

"A regular occurrence?" Padme asked worriedly. Anakin smiled roguishly.

"Sebulba has a little grudge against me," Anakin replied, as he turned back to the scowling Sebulba.

"Look, I don't want to fight you. We'll be on our way now," Anakin told Sebulba. Sebulba refused to let them pass.

"You're not worth my time Sebulba. Now, just step aside and we'll be going," Anakin said, as he grasped Padme's hand.

"Afraid that I'll beat you in front of your woman?" Sebulba taunted. Anakin smirked back.

"No, I just don't want to make a mess of you in front of her," Anakin retorted. Sebulba snarled, as his lackeys flanked him.

"You're overdue for a beating slave scum," Sebulba spat. Anakin barred his white teeth.

"I'm not a slave," Anakin spat back.

"Last chance sleamo. Back down, I don't want to fight you," Anakin warned. By now, the entire cantina was watching the confrontation, as they usually did when Anakin and Sebulba fought. Anakin sensed Sebulba was winding up for a punch. Before Sebulba could connect. Anakin punched his bony jaw. Sebulba snarled and punched Anakin in the jaw. Anakin's head turned slightly from the impact of the blow, but he easily shook it off. Dugs were comparably weak and usually hid behind weapons. Sebulba was becoming increasingly angry and drew a large vibro knife. He did not appreciate being humiliated in front of all these people.

"Stupid boy, you won't be smiling when I slice you open," Sebulba spat.

"I suggest you put the weapon away," Obi-Wan spoke.

"And who the hell are you?" Sebulba asked, snarling his grimy teeth.

"Who I am is none of your concern. Put the weapon down," Obi-Wan replied. Sebulba spit on Obi-Wan's boot in response. Anakin stared intently at Sebulba with immense concentration. Suddenly, Sebulba went flying back through the air and over the bar. He crashed into a bunch of liquor bottles before finally crashing to the floor with the liquid and glass. Anakin pointed his blaster at Sebulba's lackeys, daring them to try anything. The four worthless beings backed down and away from them, like they had seen nothing. Anakin took

Padme's hand and lead her out of the cantina, followed by a stunned Obi-Wan.

'Does Anakin realized what he just did?' Obi-Wan wondered to himself. They left the cantina and headed back to Watto's shop. Anakin shook his bloody knuckle, which had grazed one of Sebulba's fangs when he punched him.

"Stupid dugs," Anakin said. Padme grabbed his hand to examine it.

"Ani, this needs bacta. Who knows where that nasty dug has been," she replied.

"It's fine. You can patch it up when we get home, since I know you will make me let you," Anakin replied.

"It's my fault," Padme replied.

"Not it's not angel. Even if we hadn't gone there and hung around Watto's shop, he would have found me anyway. The dealers around here always tell him when I come into town, so this would have happened anyway. They all lost a lot of money when I beat Sebulba in the Boonta Eve Classic ten years ago, so I'm not the most popular person in town. I've come out of here much, much worse that this," Anakin replied.

"Anakin, that's terrible. They shouldn't be allowed to do that to you!" Padme protested.

"I know angel, but that's Tatooine for you. You either learn how to defend yourself and get good with a blaster or you get yourself killed. Sebulba has a bit of grudge against me and never turns down on opportunity to try and fight me," Anakin replied.

"Anakin, do you have any idea what you did back there?" Obi-Wan asked.

"What do you mean?" Anakin questioned.

"You Force pushed Sebulba. And powerfully too. Who taught you how to do that?" Obi-Wan asked, still amazed at how easily the Force seemed to flow through Anakin even though he was untrained.

"I don't know. I just concentrate on things when I want them to move and I listen to what the Force tells me. Then, I just do it. I don't really know how," Anakin replied honestly.

'Amazing. If he had been trained, he would be incredibly powerful. And that could have been good or bad,' Obi-Wan mused to himself.

They arrived back at Watto's shop and the part had just arrived about ten minutes earlier. Anakin paid the Toydarian and they made it back to the speeder. A couple hours later, they arrived back at the homestead. Anakin, come onto the ship with me so I can look at your hand," Padme said.

"I'm sure mom has some bacta," Anakin replied clueless.

"No Ani, you need to come on the ship with me," she beckoned, her eyes revealing to him what she really wanted.

"Oh ok," Anakin replied, as his eyes glazed a bit. Obi-Wan shook his head in amusement.

"I'll tell your mother we're back," Obi-Wan said, as he made his way for the house.

Padme sat beside him on the bed in the quarters on her ship, quietly bandaging his knuckles.

"So, why did we really come on the ship?" Anakin asked slyly.

"Ani, are you suggesting that I have ulterior motives?" Padme chided playfully, as she placed a few soft kisses along his neck.

"I hope so," he replied with a smirk. Padme climbed onto his lap, while starting to unbutton his tunic. He watched her, as she discarded his shirt, mesmerized by her beauty. Her brown eyes were glazed with desire and mirrored his own. Padme release the clip in her, allowing her brown tresses to cascade down her back. Padme cupped his face and kissed him hungrily, as they fell back onto the bed...

Mace Windu trekked carefully through the silent corridors of what he was certain was some kind of droid factory. He heard voices and quickly ran toward the source.

Count Dooku stopped speaking for a moment, as he felt a disturbance in the Force.

"Well, well, it seems we have company. Welcome Master Windu!" Dooku called. Mace was surprised for a moment. It seemed that Dooku had grown strong in the dark side, as Yoda suspected. He had scoffed when Senator Amidala had suggested that he was behind the assassination attempts on her life. But now it seemed that she was correct. Mace stepped into the light and ignited his purple saber. Dooku turned to Jango Fett.

"Leave and take the separatist leaders to the location we discussed and implement our plan," Dooku said. The bounty hunter merely nodded and led the leaders out of the room, leaving Dooku and Mace to face each other. Dooku smiled and ignited his crimson saber.

"So, political idealist turned Sith," Mace bit out.

"Oh, but I am a political idealist. My goal is to reform the Republic. Because we all know that the current system is in shambles," Dooku said.

"And you hope to fix it by joining the Sith?" Mace asked.

"Oh no my friend, my aim is to destroy the Sith and restore peace to the Republic. What if I told you that the Senate is under the control of the Sith Lord called Darth Sidious," Dooku said.

"I don't believe you. We would have sensed it," Mace replied.

"The dark side has clouded your vision my friend," Dooku replied.

"Join me Mace and together, we can destroy the Sith!" Dooku offered.

"I'll never join you Dooku!" Mace replied.

"Then, I'm worry old friend," Dooku said, as he shot Force lightning at Mace. Mace absorbed the lightning with his saber. Dooku swung his blade up and then brought it at Mace, locking with his in a powerful deadlock...

Anakin and Padme lay entangled together under a twisted mess of bedding. They lay pressed together as they basked in the after glow of their lovemaking. Their skin was slick with a thin layer of sweat and their breath was still coming in gasps, as they sucked air back into their lungs.

"We should probably clean up and head for the house. Mom will be calling us for dinner," Anakin said. Padme sighed.

"I know, though I'd much rather stay here," Padme said, as he kissed him and reluctantly got up, heading for the fresher. The sway of her hips mesmerized him.

"Ani, I could really use help scrubbing my back," she called to him. He smirked and followed her into the fresher...

A Brewing Storm

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here, because it's fun.

AN: Here's chapter 8! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 8:

Yoda sighed heavily, as his ship sped through hyperspace. He had visited Kamino to see the Clone army for himself. Thanks for representative Binks' decision to give the Chancellor emergency powers, they were now on the verge of war. He was no heading to Geonosis with a battalion of Clone troops. He sensed a great disturbance in the Force and knew that master Windu would need help.

"Sir, we are approaching Geonosis," one clone, who was identified as Commander Cody, said.

"Very good commander. Bring us out of hyperspace," Yoda replied.

"Yes sir," the clone replied. Yoda sighed heavily again. Dark and dangerous places this war would take them.

Red clashed furiously with purple. Dooku and Mace circled each other, before bringing their sabers up in another arc.

"This little duel of our has been refreshing, but it is past time for me to go," Dooku said.

"You're not going anywhere, except prison for your crimes against the Republic," Mace replied.

"Oh, I don't think so," Dooku replied, as he parried and brought his saber around. Bringing it up, he caught Mace by surprise. He struck Mace in the thigh, causing a fairly deep laceration. Mace cried out in pain, as his leg gave out and he fell to the ground.

"You fought gallantly Master Windu, I'm sorry that it has to end this way," Dooku said, as he raised his saber for the killing strike. A faint tapping got his attention and Dooku turned to face the diminutive figure that had just entered the room.

"Master Yoda," Dooku said.

"Count Dooku," Yoda replied.

"You have interfered far too much with our plans," Dooku said, as he shot Force lightning at Yoda. Yoda held out his palm and thrust it back at Dooku. He deflected it and it hit the ceiling.

"I can see this contest cannot be decided by our use of the Force, but rather our skills with a light saber," Dooku said, as he drew the curved shaft of his saber and ignited it. Yoda pulled back his cloak and willed his saber into his hand. He pressed the igniter and the emerald blade blazed forth. Yoda flipped into the air and began the duel.

Jango Fett flipped off his comlink. He had just got a tip from a friend on Tatooine that he had spotted Senator Amidala in Mos Espa with a local boy. At first, Jango scoffed at the claim, until they had mentioned there was a middle-aged man with a beard with them. They had described the man as having reddish hair, long in the back and definitely not a native of Tatooine.

"Kenobi," Jango spat. He had successfully delivered the Separatist leaders to remote planet of Dantooine where Count Dooku would be coming soon to oversee the production of more droids. Dantoonie's wet climate was not very desirable, but it's deep canyons made a perfect place for them to construct their factories.

"Come Boba, we're going to Tatooine," Jango said...

Padme stepped inside Anakin's garage. They had eaten dinner not too long ago and suffered through Owen's jokes about why they had to go get bacta from her ship. Anakin had endured all the banter and fired right back, for he was not one to be outdone. Then Beru had joined in and teased Owen herself.

"Well, I think it's sweet. Why can't you be more romantic like Anakin?" Beru had asked. Padme giggled, when she remembered Owen stumbling around his words, before finally just remaining silent. Shmi had been quiet with a knowing smile on her face. It brought her immense joy to see her baby boy so happy. Padme stood back, as sparks flew around the machine Anakin was working on, as he wielded the part into place. He smiled and removed his safety goggles.

"Now, we'll see if our little trip to get this part was worth it," Anakin said, as he replaced the panel on the vaporator and switched it on. It hummed to life and ran perfectly.

"Good as new," he said. Padme wrapped her arms around his waist and kissed his cheek.

"Like there was ever any doubt that you could fix it," she replied. He wiped his hands on a rag and then wrapped his arms around her waist. He tilted his head and brought his lips to hers. Padme closed her eyes and guided her lips to his.Anakin gently moved his lips over hers in a sensual rhythm. Padme gently parted her lips, allowing Anakin's velvety tongue to slip into her mouth. Padme moaned into the kiss, as their tongues collided and fought for control. Anakin pushed the tools away on his work bench and lifted her up, so that she was sitting before him. He had yet to break the kiss and Padme pulled him closer between her legs, as she ran her fingers through his thick curls. Anakin momentarily broke the kiss to gaze into her eyes.

"I still can't believe it sometimes," he said.

"Believe what?" she asked, as she stroked his cheek with the back of her hand.

"That you're with a guy like me and that you've chosen me," he replied.

"I think we were made for each other baby," Padme replied, as she gazed at him fondly, thinking about how handsome he was.

"I like to think so," he replied, as he kissed her again. Anakin kissed her deeply for a long moment, before reluctantly ending the kiss and helping her off his work bench.

"Come on, we should take this to Cliegg or he'll send Owen to look for me. And if he caught us like this, he'd never let me live it down," Anakin joked. Padme laughed and looped her arm in his, as they left the garage.

Anakin unloaded the vaporator off the back of the speeder bike and set it down where his step-dad wanted it. Cliegg flipped it on and smiled broadly as it hummed perfectly. He pat Anakin on the back soundly.

"You're a miracle worker son. She sounds as good as new," Cliegg said.

"No problem dad, you know I like fixing things. Our eventful trip to Mos Espa paid off," Anakin said, as he looked around.

"Where's Owen?" Anakin asked. Cliegg chuckled.

"He's with Beru. Seems he's determined to show Beru that he can be romantic too," Cliegg laughed heartily. Both Anakin and Padme laughed with him. Cliegg started to head back up to the house.

"Don't stay out here too long," he said. Anakin nodded and wrapped his arms around Padme's waist. She leaned into his embrace and they held each other while watching the binary sunset.

Jango Fett and is son Boba arrived on Tatooine early the next morning. After speaking to his contact, who revealed that she and the other man were with a boy named Anakin Skywalker, they went to Watto's shop. Watto flapped his wings and went to greet his customers.

"What can I do for you?" Watto greeted. Jango replied by leveling his blaster at him. Watto put his hands up in astonishment.

"I need to know where Anakin Skywalker lives," Jango stated. Sebulba, who was also in the shop buying parts for his racer, raised his eyebrow.

"What did the brat do?" Sebulba asked.

"I'm after the woman that's with him. My client wants her dead," Jango replied.

"I can show you where Skywalker lives...for a price," Sebulba said.

"We'll discuss that later. Just show me where he lives," Jango spat, as he pointed the blaster at Sebulba.

"Are you going to kill the boy?" Sebulba asked.

"If he gets in my way," Jango replied. Sebulba smirked evilly and followed Jango to his speeder...

Count Dooku was tiring quickly. He was exerted from his earlier battle with Mace and his old master was still a very formidable opponent.

"Fought well you have, my old padawan," Yoda said.

"Yes, but I'm afraid this duel will have to be finished another day," Dooku said, as he used the Force to release a beam. He sent it barreling down on Master Windu. Yoda extinguished his saber and reached deeply into the Force, effectively stopping it and setting it aside. But this provided Dooku with the opportunity he needed to escape. Yoda ordered a couple of troops to help Mace back to the ship. For now, they would return to Coruscant...

It was midday and the binary suns were high in the sky. The Tatooine heat was in full Force and Padme fanned herself again, as she sat in the shade that was provided by the house. She didn't know how he stood the heat, but there he was, standing out in it like it didn't bother him a bit. She much preferred the cooler Tatooine evenings when she and Anakin would lay under a sky blanketed by stars. It was quickly becoming a nightly thing for them and she couldn't wait until those awful suns would set. Then, she would cuddle into his arms, breath in his familiar scent, and lay underneath the stars with him. Anakin smiled at her and waved his hand in front of her face. She looked up at him and blushed, realizing that he had caught her daydreaming. He beamed at her and leaned down, pressing a soft, tender kiss to her lips.

"What were you thinking about?" Anakin asked curiously. She smiled slyly.

"You," she replied, as she stood up and gave him another kiss. Anakin was about to follow her into the house, when the hairs on the back of his neck stood up on end. He turned abruptly, scanning the miles of sand in front of him with a scrutinizing gaze.

" *There's trouble young one,"* Qui-Gon spoke to him.

"Ani, what is it?" Padme asked, a wave of concern washing over her face.

"I'm...I'm not sure. I think we might have been discovered," Anakin said. Before he could call for Obi-Wan, the Jedi Knight was already there.

"Obi-Wan, I sense something dark in the Force," Anakin said. Obi-Wan looked at him, still surprised by how the Force imparted to him.

"I sense it too and it's familiar. I think it may be the bounty hunter I encountered on Kamino," Obi-Wan said.

"Bounty hunter!" Anakin exclaimed. Obi-Wan nodded and drew his saber. Anakin grabbed the blaster from his belt and energized it.

"Go inside Padme," Anakin ordered. Padme wanted to protest, but she knew that she should do what Anakin and Obi-Wan said. She scurried inside, but peered out of the entrance enough so she could see them.

Not much later, they could see a speeder with three figures in it heading straight for them.

" *Let the Force flow though you Anakin. Let it guide your movements and listen to its call,"* Qui-Gon's voice reminded him. Anakin did as he was instructed and centered himself in the Force. Obi-Wan looked over at him in astonishment, wondering how he was doing that. No one had ever taught him to do such things and opening one's self up to the Force like Anakin was doing now required an intense amount of training. He promised himself that he would ask Anakin about it after this. Obi-Wan and Anakin readied their weapons, as the speeder drew closer...

The Bounty on Amidala

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox, I just play here.

AN: Here's chapter 9! Thanks for all the great reviews! Enjoy!

Never Gone

Chapter 9: The Bounty on Amidala

Jango could clearly see the house they were gaining on now.

"Well, it looks like we have a welcoming party waiting for," Jango said, as he instantly recognized Kenobi. He assumed that the boy standing with him was Skywalker.

"That's Skywalker. I've shown you where he lives. Now, let's discuss reward," Sebulba said greedily.

"Here's your reward," Jango said, as he raised his blaster and shot Sebulba in the head. He pushed the body out of the moving speeder and into the sand.

"Filthy Dug," Jango grumbled. Boba had stayed behind to get the ship. He was tracking his father from there and would arrive in a few minutes providing them with a quick get away. Jango eased up on the throttle, before coming to a screeching halt. Obi-Wan's saber blazed to life and Anakin's blaster whined, as he flipped the safety off. Jango jumped out of the speeder.

"I'm here for the Senator, but I see you're not going to make this easy on me," Jango said.

"You won't touch her," Anakin snarled.

"I'm afraid that Nute Gunray wants to see her execution personally. I would prefer just to kill her and be done with it, but the good viceroy

is offering me twice the credits to bring her to him and credits do the talking," Jango smirked.

"You'll have to go through us," Obi-Wan said, as he spun his saber and engaged Jango. Anakin stood on the sidelines. He took a vibro blade from his belt and looked for an opening. When Jango elbowed Obi-Wan in the stomach, Anakin threw the vibroblade, as Jango raised his blaster at Obi-Wan. The blade caught Jango's hand just right, causing him to drop the blaster. Jango growled and turned to Anakin.

"You'll pay for that desert rat," Jango said, as he released his harnessing cable. It wrapped Anakin and held him in place.

"I'll deal with you after I deal with Kenobi," Jango said, as he shot a barrage of blasts at Obi-Wan, who blocked and evaded.

Seeing Anakin's plight, Padme rushed out of the hovel to help him.

"Padme, get back inside!" Anakin said. Padme took a blade from his belt and cut Anakin loose. This caught Jango's attention, as he felt his cable slacken. Jango sidestepped Obi-Wan and headed for Padme. Anakin leapt in front of her. He pulled the trigger on his blaster, but the armor Jango was wearing resisted the blaster bolts. Obi-Wan was about to advance on them, but a ship came out of no where, causing him to take cover, as the pilot shot at him.

"Looks like our ride has arrived Senator. Come along," Jango said, as he grabbed her arm and began dragging her to the ship. Anakin began to run after them, but Boba had good aim on him and Anakin was forced to take cover on the ground.

"Anakin!" he heard Padme's frightened call, as she disappeared inside the ship. Anakin felt the Force wrap around him. He leapt up and began a Force assisted run to the ship.

"Anakin, wait!" Obi-Wan called, but Anakin ignored him. The ship hovered a few feet off the ground. Just as the ship's ramp was

closing, Anakin leapt onto it and scrambled inside, just as it closed. Obi-Wan stared after him. once again, Anakin had shocked him by using the Force to things he shouldn't know how to do. Thinking quickly, Obi-Wan tossed a tracking device at the ship. It locked on and started working.

Jango removed his helmet, as the ship slowly left Tatooine's atmosphere.

"Dad, look!" Boba cried. Jango spotted Anakin, who was heaving in breaths of air.

"Anakin!" Padme called.

"You are persistent, I'll give you that," Jango said, as he grabbed a fist full of Anakin's hair and hauled him to his feet. Anakin swung and punched him in the jaw. Jango was flung back, but quickly recovered. He hit Anakin in the side of the head. A sharp piece of metal from his armor cut him, just next to his right eye. Jango hit him again on the back of the head with the butt of his blaster. Padme cried out for him, as she knelt down beside him. "Boba, I'll fly the ship. Come back here and keep an eye on them," Jango said, as he went to the cockpit to set a course for Dantooine.

Shmi came dashing out of the house, frantically searching for her son and Padme.

"Obi-Wan, what happened?" she asked.

"I'm afraid that the bounty hunter got a hold of Padme. Anakin jumped onto his ship at the last minute. I placed a tracking device on the hull of his ship that I will be able to tack from Padme's ship. Artoo, come with me. We must contact the Jedi Council at once," Obi-Wan said to the little droid.

"You'll find them, won't you?" Shmi asked. Obi-Wan smiled gently at her.

"I won't rest until they're safe," Obi-Wan replied. About thirty minutes later, with the Lars watching on, Obi-Wan left Tatooine in Padme's ship with Artoo and Threepio.

About an hour after they had entered hyperspace, Anakin began to regain consciousness. Padme had his head on her lap and she had torn a piece of fabric off her skirt to dab the blood on his temple. Without any bacta, she knew that the cut would probably scar. But she did her best to clean it with what she had so that it would not get infected. She had asked Boba for a bacta patch, but he refused, stating that where they were going, they wouldn't need it.

"Anakin, can you hear me?" Padme asked. His vision swam, but he could make out the outlines of her beautiful face. He blinked his eyes several times, allowing his vision to clear for the most part.

"Ani?" she asked.

"You are the most beautiful woman in the galaxy," he said, as he stared up at her with one of those looks that made her want to melt. Her brown curls were a bit disheveled and they framed her lovely face. Yes, he was certain she was the most beautiful sight that he'd ever seen. He slowly sat up and gazed around at the ship they were on. His eyes came to rest on the dark haired boy that watched him intently.

"I was so worried about you. This cut was bleeding like crazy," Padme said. He smiled at her.

"You know head wounds always bleed a lot," Anakin replied.

"I know, but I was still scared to death," she said, as she stroked her fingers through his hair.

Anakin saw a couple tears trek down her cheeks. He reached up and brushed them away.

"Please don't cry angel, I'll find a way out of this," he said, as he pulled her into his arms. Anakin heard someone snort in disgust. He looked up to see Boba glaring at him and Jango standing there with a smirk.

"When we get to Dantooine, your as good as dead boy. And so is she, once I turn her over to Viceroy Gunray," Jango said. Anakin glared back, before turning his attention back to Padme. He looked at her and winked, giving her the impression that he had some kind of plan.

Hours later, Anakin felt them dip out of hyperspace.

"Padme, listen to me very carefully. I'm going to take out the cabin lights here in a moment and no matter what you hear, I need you to stay face down on the floor and cover your head, until I come for you," Anakin whispered to her. She looked at him with frightened eyes.

"Anakin," she began, but she shushed her.

"I'll be all right, I promise," he said, as he kissed her for a long moment. Anakin observed Boba, who was still watching them from across the cabin.

" *I don't know if I can do this master, I won't be able to see anything," Anakin said in his head.*

" *Yes you can Anakin. The Force will guide you and allow you to see without your eyes. Trust in it and it won't let you down," Qui-Gon told him through the Force.*

Anakin glanced above Boba's head and noticed a large, heavy travel case. Reaching deeply into the Force, he focused on the cabin light switch and cut the lights. A clattering was heard, followed by a scream from Boba, as he was knocked out by the large case falling on him. Padme had did as he said and was lying on the floor,

covering her head. Anakin centered himself in the Force, as Jango fumbled around, trying to get the lights back on. Anakin picked up the heavy travel case and hurled it at Jango. Anakin jumped around him and attempted to take control of the ship. But suddenly, blaster shots rang out around him, as Jango shot blindly into the cockpit. The controls sparked wildly.

"Oh shit," Anakin mumbled, as he tried to maneuver the ship. But he wasn't able to get any response from anything. The ship lurched, as it skimmed into the atmosphere of Dantooine.

"Stupid!" Anakin cursed, as he felt Jango behind him.

"Don't move kid," Jango said.

"You realize that we're going to crash now, thanks to you," Anakin replied.

"It won't matter for you, because you'll be dead before then," Jango threatened. Reaching deeply into the Force, as Qui-Gon instructed, he pulled the blaster from Jango's hand.

"No, you'll be dead," Anakin said, as he shot Jango in the head. He hated the fact that he had to kill a man, but at the same time, this man would have killed his fiancé without a second thought. He jammed the brakes on, hoping to at least get some response and get them to slow down a bit. He stepped over the body and ran to Padme. He helped her off the floor and strapped her into the seat and then quickly strapped himself in.

"We're going to crash, aren't we?" Padme said, her eyes tearing, as she looked at his silhouette in the darkness.

"I'm afraid so angel. But hold on tight to me and we'll make it through this, I promise," he replied, as he kissed her forehead and put his arms around her. Padme wrapped her arms around him and buried her head in the nape of his neck.

"Ani, in case we don't make it..." Padme said.

"We'll make it Padme...we have to," Anakin replied, determination lining his face.

"But if we don't, please know how much I love you. I truly, deeply, love you," she sobbed.

"I love you too my angel," Anakin replied, as he slanted his lips over hers and kissed her deeply. They broke the kiss, as the felt the ship brush a hard surface. Anakin gripped the seat tightly with one arm and Padme with the other, as he practically throwing himself over her. A large, crashing ship disrupted the still nature of the Dantooine marshes...

Danger on Dantooine

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here.

AN: Thanks for all the great reviews! Here's the next chapter for your enjoyment!

Never Gone

Chapter 10: Danger on Dantooine

Black smoke billowed from the wreckage of the Slave I. Sounds of nature surrounded the ship, as it rested haphazardly in the clearing surrounded by trees. The glass of the viewing window in the cockpit was shattered, as a man had been thrown through it upon impact. But this man had been dead before the crash, as was evident by the hole in the center of his forehead where he had been shot. But no tears would be shed for this man, for he was once known as Jango Fett. One of the most skilled and dangerous bounty hunters in the galaxy. He had made a living preying on innocent and good people, killing them for rich and evil men who desired to destroy everything that good and pure about the galaxy. He had also had a hand in helping create a Clone army, a thought that was particularly unsettling to most.

Anakin groaned at the shooting pain in his head, as he opened his eyes in the smoky cabin.

"Padme, are you okay?" he asked. She whimpered and opened her eyes, letting them adjust for a moment.

"I think so," she replied. Anakin unstrapped them and helped her stand up.

"Come on, we don't want to stay here long. Whoever Jango was bringing us to will probably have seen the crash and we don't want to

be here when they come to investigate," Anakin said. Anakin glanced into the cockpit, where Boba had been thrown in the impact. He didn't even have to go check for a pulse, for it was very clear that the boy's neck had been snapped sometime during the crash. He gently took Padme's and they looked away. He was only a boy, but both knew that he would have followed in his father's footsteps, making a living off killing people.

"Let's see if they have any survival packs stored anywhere. We're going to need them," Anakin said. Padme and he scoured the ship for anything useful.

"Back here Ani," Padme called, as she found two packs stored in a compartment at the rear of the ship. The strapped the packs on their backs and Anakin holstered a blaster on his belt. Anakin forced the emergency top hatch open on the ship and jumped up, grabbing a hold of the side. He pulled himself through and then reached down to pull Padme through the hatch. He jumped down to the ground and then reached up to help Padme down. Anakin looked around to survey their surroundings and saw nothing but wilderness for miles.

"How much do you know about Dantooine?" Anakin asked.

"Not much, except that most of the planet is covered in marshes and wilderness. I have heard that there are a few sparse settlements of humans here. I've heard some are scientists and explorers that live here to study the nature.

"Then if Nute Gunray is building his factories here, it's a good bet that he is no friend to those people," Anakin surmised.

"Probably not. His industry would be very destructive to an eco-system like this," Padme replied.

"Look at the sky over there Padme," Anakin pointed. Most of the Dantooine sky was covered with white pillow-like clouds, some darker than others indicating that the planet had lots of moisture and

rain. But this particular section was brownish black with the smog and pollution of industry.

"That must be where the trade federation is operating here," Padme replied. He took her hand and led her through a clearing in the other direction.

"Then this way is probably our best bet. Let's just hope we can find someone who has some who can help us. If there are explorers and scientists anywhere on the planet, there bound to at least have a comm station," Anakin said. Padme squeezed his hand, as they began their trek through the Dantooine wilderness.

Obi-Wan Kenobi dropped out of hyperspace over Dantooine. He began his landing sequence and descended into the atmosphere. Luckily, the tracking device was still active and Jango had not discovered it. As he neared the clearing where the bounty hunter's ship was, he was met with an awful sight. The ship was wreck and it had obviously crashed. Obi-Wan flew his fighter low to the ground and found another clearing not too far away and set Padme's sleek Nubian cruiser down. He then journeyed to the crash sight, expecting the worst. When he arrived, he spotted Jango's body on the ground. His face was covered in blood from when he had been thrown through the glass. But the blaster hole in his forehead told Obi-Wan that he was dead before the crash. Had Anakin overpowered Jango? It wouldn't surprise him if that were the case, as he had seen the boy do remarkable things thus far. He climbed in the shattered window and saw Boba next. It was clear that the boy had died in the impact of the crash. He searched the rest of the ship and found nothing. Hope filled him, as he realized they both had to be alive. He quickly fled the crash sight, as he heard a commotion approaching. He hid in a nearby brush and masked his presence in the Force. Count Dooku emerged from the pathway, followed by Nute Gunray, Rune Haako, and several other Separatist leaders. Dooku surveyed Jango's body for a few moments.

"Rune says that Jango's son is inside the ship still. He appears to have died in the crash like Jango. There is no sign of Senator Amidala," Gunray said crossly.

"Jango did not die in the crash viceroy. It seems that he died before it from a blaster shot to the head," Dooku said.

"That's impossible! How could that girl possibly over power someone like Jango!" Gunray shouted angrily.

"She did not viceroy. From the angle of this wound, it appear that whoever shot him is at least 6'2". It seems that Jango had a stowaway who attempted to rescue the Senator. They must have escaped into the wilderness," Dooku said.

"Find them! I want the Senator brought to me, so I can make her suffer!" Gunray ranted.

"Patience viceroy, our droids will find them," Dooku said. The party retreated back toward their living structure, satisfied that the droids that were now scouring the planet would find Senator Amidala and her accomplice.

Obi-Wan quietly made his way back to hisship and quickly contacted the Council telling them that he had found Dooku's location. After his transmission with the council ended, he set off to find Anakin and Padme before the droids did...

After walking for hours, Anakin and Padme sat down under a tree to rest. Anakin opened up his survival pack and pulled out the small canteen of water. He took a drink and handed it to Padme who also took a drink. Then he pulled out the rations, which were dried meat-like sticks. After the very small meal, Anakin leaned back against the tree to rest for a moment. Padme rested her head on his shoulder and he wrapped his arm around her waist. They had hoped by now that they would have found a human settlement or something, but the wilderness went on for miles. The sun was beginning to set and

Anakin didn't like their chances in these woods after dark. Suddenly, they heard a rumbling in the sky. There was a flash of lightning and large droplets of rain began to come down on them. The sky seemed to open up on them in a downpour. Anakin and Padme began running through the woods, hoping to find some kind of shelter. The sun was nearly gone and the temperature had started to drop considerably, making the rain cold.

"Ani, I think I see a cave over there!" Padme called loudly over the rain. They were both soaked to the bone now.

"I think you're right," Anakin said, as he squeezed her hand tighter and began running toward it. They went inside and looked around, hoping it was not home to any wildlife.

"This cave looks like it was man made. Maybe we're getting close to finding any people that live here," Anakin mentioned.

Anakin and Padme shrugged off their survival packs, which were luckily waterproof and Anakin immediately went about making a fire. He pulled out several long sticks from the pack. They didn't look like much, but they were specially coated with a highly flammable substance. Their small size made them ideal for storing in survival packs. Anakin laid them together and then lit them a blaze with a match. Padme shivered violently, as a cold wind blew into the cave. Both she and Anakin were wearing thin clothes, as they had been ideal on Tatooine. But now, the thin blue cropped top baring her midsection and long, airy skirt were doing little to keep her warm.

"We're lucky the blankets in these packs didn't get wet," Anakin said, as he laid them out by the fire. His teeth chattered, as did Padme's as another gust of wind blew in. Anakin motioned her over and she moved over to him.

"I have a feeling the temperature is going to drop even more, so these wet clothes are going to have to go," he said. She smiled slyly.

"Well, it's a good thing we're plenty comfortable with each other, or this could be awkward," she teased, as Anakin pulled his tunic over his head. After undressing and laying their clothes out to dry, they snuggled down together in the blankets. Still shivering, they pressed their bodies together tightly, using body heat to keep them warm. Padme rested her head in the nape of his neck, as he held her tightly.

"Anakin, do you think they've found the crash by now?" Padme asked, worry filling her eyes.

"They probably found it not long after we left, especially if they were expecting Jango," Anakin replied.

"They're probably looking for us, aren't they?" Padme replied.

"Probably, I won't lie to you angel," Anakin said, as he caressed her cheek.

"I love you Anakin...and if we're going to die, then I can't think of any place else I would rather die than in your arms," Padme said, as she gazed into his piercing blue eyes.

"We're not going to die, I'll find a way to get us out of this angel," he promised. Padme slanted her lips over his in a passionate kiss, which Anakin returned. The kiss grew feverish and desperate, as they became lost in one another. Outside the cave, the cold air and rain was relentless, but it paled in comparison to the love that burned hot and brightly between the two people in the cave...

Obi-Wan Kenobi sat inside Senator Amidala's ship, waiting for the storm to let up. He had tried searching, but in the dark and the rain combined, it was useless. He would wait out the storm and begin searching at first light. He only hoped that the storm was interfering with the search droids sensors enough that they were unable to search as well. Obi-Wan had to find Anakin and Padme before those

droids did. He could not and would not let Dooku get his hands on either of them...

Captive

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AN: Here's chapter 11! Enjoy and thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 11: Captive

The next morning, the sun shone brightly through the trees. Anakin and Padme dressed in their still slightly damp clothes and then set off through the wilderness. After they had been walking for about an hour, Anakin stopped suddenly, and pulled her behind a tree. They both watched, as three search droids walked by. They stopped and scanned the area, before moving on.

"This forest is crawling with them. We've got to find some help soon," Anakin said, as they continued on.

Soon after the storm had cleared, Obi-Wan flew the ship to a new clearing to keep from being discovered. Then, he began his search in earnest with the morning sunlight to help guide him. Obi-Wan bent down to take a look at the tracks in the dirt. Both sets were definitely human and were side by side. One set was small and the other larger, like a man and a woman. Obi-Wan was convinced that it had to be Anakin and Padme. He quickly stood up and began following the footprints. Suddenly, he heard the whine of a blaster behind him. He expected a droid, but was surprised to hear a female voice.

"Don't move, federation scum!" she spat.

"Federation? She thinks I'm with the trade federation?" Obi-Wan thought to himself, as he slowly turned around. He was met with the sight of a beautiful woman with tattered clothes. She had long sandy brown hair that fell around her in ringlets. She had a slender, toned

frame and looked as though she had been living in the jungle for some time.

"I assure you that I'm not with the federation maim. I'm a Jedi and I'm searching for my friends who crash landed her. I must find them before the Trade Federation does," Obi-Wan said. She spotted his light saber and lowered her blaster.

"What would the trade federation want with your friends?" she asked suspiciously.

"One of them happens to be the Senator from Naboo and they want her dead. Her fiance is with her, so I know that she is safe. But I must find them before Viceroy Gunray does," Obi-Wan said.

"Did you say the Senator from Naboo! As in Padme Amidala of Naboo?" the woman asked curiously.

"Yes, do you know her?" Obi-Wan asked.

"She's my cousin. I was on my way back from Chandrilla after a meeting with Senator Mon Mothma a year ago, when my ship crashed here. I suppose the Naboo government assumed I didn't survive the crash. So, I've been trying to survive here, hoping that someone would find me someday. Then that blasted Trade Federation showed up and started producing their droids here. It seems that Gunray is still holding a grudge against Padme," the woman said.

"Forgive me, but you haven't introduced yourself," Obi-Wan said. The woman smiled.

"Neither have you Jedi," she replied.

"I'm Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi," he told her.

"It's nice to meet you Obi-Wan. I'm Lea Naberrie," she replied, as they continued walking. Suddenly, they heard a woman scream. It

was faint, but they were both sure it was Padme.

"That sounded like Padme!" Lea said, as she and Obi-Wan began running...

Anakin and Padme stopped and sucked air into their starved lungs.

"I think we lost those damn droids," Anakin said. A branch snapped under Padme's foot. She screamed, as the an animal trap sprang up, clamping her ankle in it.

"Padme!" he yelled, as he tried to pry the metal jaws from her ankle.

"Oh Ani, it hurts!" she cried. Anakin gritted his teeth, as he pulled the metal apart.

"I know angel, I know, but I need you to pull your foot out, as soon as I have this open," Anakin said. He pulled with all his might and opened the trap enough for Padme to pull her foot out. Anakin tossed the trap away and then cradled a crying Padme in his arms. He carried her and sat her against a tree, while he inspected her wound. It was bleeding bad and he would have to get her some bacta soon, or it would get infected.

"It'll be all right angel," Anakin said, as he took his shirt off and tore it into strips. He wrapped them tightly around her wound and secured them there with a knot.

"Anakin!" Obi-Wan called, as he finally found them.

"Obi-Wan?" Anakin asked in disbelief.

"Thank goodness your both safe," Obi-Wan said.

"We are, but Padme needs bacta. She caught her foot in an animal trap. How did you find us?" Anakin asked.

"Fortunately, I was able to attach a tracking device to the hull of Jango's ship. I've been searching for you both for a day," Obi-Wan replied. Padme's eyes were fixated on the woman standing next to Obi-Wan in disbelief.

"Lea? This is impossible," Padme said.

"You know her angel?" Anakin asked.

"She's my cousin Ani, but they told me her ship crashed a year ago and that she was dead," Padme replied.

"I survived the crash and I've been stuck in this jungle ever since. It seems that you caught your foot in one of those filthy Neimodians traps. They've been setting them to catch food. Instead of shooting the animals and giving them a humane death, those blasted Neimodians use these to capture them. They usually leave the poor things to suffer for hours before they finally come and kill them," Lea said in disgust.

"Your ship is not far from here Padme. Let's go and get that ankle taken care of," Obi-Wan said. Padme nodded, as Anakin lifted her into his arms.

"Aren't you going to introduce me Padme?" Lea asked.

"Sorry Lea, this is my fiancé Anakin Skywalker. Anakin, this is my cousin, Lea Naberrie," Padme introduced them.

"Little Ani Skywalker? The boy that destroyed the federation control ship?" Lea asked in disbelief. Anakin blushed.

"Yes Lea, that's him," Padme replied.

"Well, you certainly have grown Anakin," she replied. They reached Padme's ship and Anakin set her down on the bench. He began unwrapping her wound, but Lea stopped him.

"I can take care of her Anakin, it'll give us a chance to catch up," Lea said, noticing that Obi-Wan had went into the cockpit to try and contact the Jedi.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Positive," she replied. Anakin leaned in and gave her a tender kiss.

"I'm going to go clean up then," he replied, as he left for the cabin area to use the fresher. As soon as he left, Lea turned to Padme.

"Wow!" she said. Padme blushed.

"He is handsome, isn't he?" she asked shyly.

"Oh he is, but I think the term sex on legs would better describe him," Lea replied. Padme's mouth dropped open.

"LEA!" Padme scolded.

"You don't agree?" Lea asked. Padme looked down, blushing madly.

"Oh, so you do agree," Lea replied mischievously. Padme grinned and nodded her head.

"Definitely, but hands off, because he's mine," she giggled.

"Don't worry, I'll only look. Besides, he's a little young for me. What is he, eighteen?" Lea asked. Padme blushed.

"Nineteen, almost twenty," Padme replied.

"Mmm...he certainly is something. But that Jedi is more my type," Lea said.

"Well, unfortunately, Jedi aren't allowed to form attachments," Padme replied.

"Yes, such a waste. I haven't seen a man in over a year, but I must say these two are the finest specimens I think I've ever seen," Lea said. Padme hugged her. Lea hadn't changed a bit.

"I've missed you so much. I'm so glad you're all right. We were all devastated when we heard about the crash," Padme replied.

"I've missed you too Padme. I thought I would never see you or anyone else again," Lea replied.

An hour later, both Lea and Padme had cleaned up. Luckily, the Naberrie women were usually all about the same size so Lea fit into Padme's clothes without a problem. The bacta had helped Padme's ankle immensely and she wasn't having too much difficulty walking on it. Padme had donned a white jumpsuit with silver arm cuffs, signifying her high office. Lea dressed in a similar outfit, only hers was dark green.

"As soon as the sun sets, it should be safe for you to take off without them noticing anyone leaving the atmosphere. I'll stay here and wait for the other Jedi," Obi-Wan announced.

"By yourself? I'm not sure I like that idea," Anakin replied.

"Me either," Padme told him.

"I will be fine. You must get off this planet Senator," Obi-Wan replied. Suddenly, Artoo began clicking and beeping wildly, while stomping his droid feet on the floor.

"What's he so upset about?" Lea asked, as Anakin pulled the translator from his belt.

"He says that we're being surrounded," Anakin said. Suddenly, they heard a regal voice speak.

"Senator Amidala, you are surrounded. It would be wise for you and your accomplices to come out now," Count Dooku spoke.

"If you do not come out, then I will be forced to kill your friends. Come out quietly and we can avoid that," Dooku said. Padme stepped bravely to the door, but Anakin stopped her.

"I won't let you go out there," he told her.

"Ani, I couldn't bare it if anything happened to any of you because of me," she said.

"I'm going out there with you. I will not let those monsters kill you! They'll have to kill me first," Anakin said, as he clutched her hands in his own.

"I love you Anakin," Padme said, tears shining in her eyes.

"I love you too Padme," he said, as he leaned down and kissed her passionately. With their hands linked, Anakin and Padme exited the ship, followed by Obi-Wan and Lea.

Nute Gunray sneered evilly, as he set his sights on Amidala.

"At last, you are in my possession Senator. I will enjoy watching your execution," Gunray said, as he traced his grubby finger along her jaw line, making Padme shrug away in disgust.

"Don't touch her," Gunray heard the young man next to her growl.

"Ah...you must be the boy responsible for killing Jango. He was our best assassin and you will pay dearly for that. You will die alongside your beloved Senator," Gunray said.

"Take them away!" the viceroy spat. The four were shackled and led into a transport to be taken back to the trade federation compound...

The Arena

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox, I just play here.

AN: Here's chapter 12! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 12: The Arena

Anakin and Padme entwined their shackled hands as best they could, as they stood before the Separatists leaders. Nute Gunray sneered at them evilly.

"I'm going to enjoy your execution immensely Senator. Your interference during the blockade nearly cost me everything and now you'll pay with your blood. In a few minutes, you'll be led into the arena where you'll be fed to a nexu. It is a particular nasty animal that enjoys torturing it's prey by tearing them to pieces before it finally kills them," Gunray said, as he stood face to face with her.

"You're the one who launched an illegal blockade against my planet. And it seems that I did not cost you enough since you are not in prison where you belong," Padme replied, with her head held high.

"With no small effort on my part, I managed to avoid prison, no thanks to you dear Senator. But now, you will finally pay for what you've done and I will watch as you suffer before you die!" Gunray spat, as he turned his attention to the young man that was holding her hands and glaring at him with malice.

"And you boy, you will die too today. Dooku has informed me that you're not only responsible for the death of Jango, but also for the destruction of my droid control ship during the blockade. I will watch with great pleasure as you are both executed. Take them to the arena!" Gunray ordered. The four were led away and loaded into two

carriages, which were attached to two animals. Anakin and Padme were put in one, while Obi-Wan and Lea were pushed into the other.

Padme laid her head against Anakin's chest and Anakin lifted his shackled arms around her tiny frame so he could hold her.

"Don't be afraid," Anakin told her.

"I'm not afraid to die, not with you there, holding me," she told him, as she gazed up into his blue eyes. Tears shined in her own brown orbs.

"I love you Padme and I'm going to do whatever I can to save us," Anakin told her. And she knew he would. She knew that he would do whatever it took to protect her. His devotion toward her still amazed her and she knew that he would fight for them until there was no longer breath in his body. She would fight too, for she was not one to give up without a fight.

"I love you too Anakin, I just wish that...that we would have had more time together. You've made me so happy, more happy than I ever imagined was possible. And I wanted to spend the rest of my life being your wife and making you happy too," Padme said, as a few tears dripped down her cheeks. He smiled down at her.

"But you already have angel. You've already made me the happiest man in the galaxy just by loving me," he replied. She smiled and kissed him softly.

"And, as far as I'm concerned, you're already my wife. All we're missing is the official ceremony. We've already pledged ourselves to each other and vowed to love one another always. That's marriage to me angel," he replied. The tears fell harder down Padme's cheeks.

"Oh Ani," she cried into his chest, as he wrapped her tightly in his strong arms. She raised her head a few moments later to look into his eyes again.

"You're right, I'm Padme Skywalker. I'm your wife and you're my husband, now and forever, no matter what," Padme said passionately. Anakin leaned down and kissed her passionately. She slanted her head, so he could deepen the kiss.

Lea gazed forlornly at her cousin.

"I've never seen her so happy," Lea said.

"I can assure you that I will do everything I can to get us all out of this alive," Obi-Wan said, trying to reassure her. Lea smiled.

"We all used to worry about Padme. We wondered if she'd ever stop working herself to death and find someone could love her like she deserved to be loved. She's finally found it and now Gunray's going to steal that from her. Damn that Neimodian, damn him to Sith hell," Lea hissed. She felt Obi-Wan's hand on her shoulder and turned to gaze into his blue eyes.

"Help is on the way Lea, you can't lose hope," Obi-Wan said, as he took a moment to notice the unique color of her eyes. They were a light brown, but in the light at certain angles, there was a cast of green to them. He suddenly found himself getting lost in them and quickly removed his hand, trying to avoid the kind of thoughts that were now entering his mind. He was a Jedi and he could not afford to form another attachment. He was far too attached already to Anakin and Padme, thinking of them like a brother and sister. Even that was too much attachment in the eyes of the Jedi and it was certainly something that he would have to quell...whether he wanted to or not. The carriages began to move, breaking Padme apart from Anakin. They squinted, as their eyes adjusted to the sunlight in the arena. There were three posts in the center.

As Padme was led to her post, she placed a hairpin between her teeth, in hopes of picking her locks. Anakin gazed at Padme, as he was led to his post to await whatever means of execution they decided for him. He only hoped that he could fight whatever it was and do so in time to save Padme from the Nexu that Gunray had

promised for her. Obi-Wan and Lea were led to the last post. Up in the balcony, the Separatists leaders, several bounty hunters, and Count Dooku watched on, eager for the bloodshed they were sure to witness. Three large gates opened in the arena, each lining up with the three posts. While they were not on Geonosis, their execution was a traditional Geonosian execution and it seemed that as one of the separatists leaders, Poggle the Lesser had seen fit to have this arena built. Out of Obi-Wan's gate, an Acklay emerged. It screeched loudly, as Poggle the Lesser's Geonosian guards poked and prodded it with their staves.

"An Acklay! Oh Gods, it had to be an Acklay!" Lea panicked.

"We must remain calm Lea," Obi-Wan told her.

"There's an Acklay getting ready to eat us. At which point do you determine that it's okay to panic!" she yelled back.

"Jedi do not panic," Obi-Wan replied. Lea rolled her eyes.

"Well then, Master Jedi, I am most interested in seeing how you're going to manage to get us out of this alive," she replied sarcastically. Obi-Wan blanched. Force, this woman had a tongue! He found her simply aggravating at times, yet fascinating. He shook those thoughts away, as the Acklay slowly made its way to them.

Out of Anakin's gate, a Reek emerged. It snarled and prepared to charge. Out of Padme's gate, a nexu emerged, growling and ready for its prey.

"Focus Anakin. That Reek is a weak-minded animal. You can use your abilities in the Force to encourage it to work for you rather than against you," Qui-Gon spoke to him.

"But what about Padme, I've got to get to her!" Anakin said.

"She'll be fine until you can, but only if you calm yourself and use the Force to aid you," Qui-Gon told him. Anakin opened his eyes and

looked over at Padme. She had managed to pick one of her shackles loose and quickly began climbing up the poll where she would be safe for the time being. The Reek came charging at Anakin. Centering himself in the Force, he managed to lift himself up and over and onto the back of the beast. the metal ring holding his chains broke. Anakin swung the chains around the beasts neck, attempting to rein it. The Reek, however, was bucking wildly in its anger. The Acklay jabbed it's claw like tentacle at Obi-Wan. He moved just right, so that the Acklay busted through the pole, releasing his and Lea's chains from the metal rings. Obi-Wan grabbed Lea's hand, and began backing them away from the angry creature. Obi-Wan picked up a long stave from the ground and began trying to defend them against the oncoming creature. Padme knelt at the top of the pole trying to undo the other shackle around her wrist. The nexu clawed wildly, attempting to climb the pole. He was nearly at the top and Padme whacked him down with the chains. Unfortunately, the nexu swiped his claws violently across her back, tearing the mid section away from her uniform and leaving several deep lacerations on her back. Padme cried out in immense pain, as the creatures claws made contact with her flesh. Anakin's head shot up at Padme's cry.

"Hang on Padme!" he called. Unfortunately, this break in concentration allowed the Reek to buck him off. Anakin held on tightly to the reins, as the Reek dragged him behind it. Frantically, he tried to take control of the situation again.

Obi-Wan smiled, as he managed to clamp the jaws of the Acklay with the stave. But his smile disappeared when the creatures vice-like jaws snapped the stave in half and started to come after them again.

Padme finally got the shackle on her wrist off. Swinging down on the chain, she kicked the nexu away, hoping that it would deter it for the time being. She quickly climbed back up on the pole to safety.

"She can't do that! Shoot her...or something!" Gunray demanded.

"Patience Viceroy, she will die," Dooku assured him.

Meanwhile, Anakin had finally gotten on his feet. He held his hand out and used the Force to calm the beast as Qui-Gon was instructing him. Once he was subdued enough, Anakin mounted him again, swinging the chains around it's neck to rein it in. With complete control this time, Anakin shook the reins and charged toward the snarling nexu. The Reek trampled the nexu, killing it before it could make another strike at Padme.

"Jump Padme!" Anakin called. Padme nodded and jumped, landing behind Anakin. She sighed with relief, as she wrapped her arms around his waist and kissed his cheek. Anakin shook the reins again and headed for Obi-Wan and Lea.

Anakin charged toward them, allowing Lea and Obi-Wan to jump onto the reek also. It was a tight squeeze, but Anakin carried them to a safer distance from the Acklay. Suddenly, several droidekas rolled into the arena and stood up, taking aim. Slowly, the arena was surrounded by battle droids.

Count Dooku smiled evilly, as he watched the events unfolding. Suddenly, he heard the familiar hum of a light saber. Dooku turned and smiled knowingly.

"Master Windu," he greeted.

"This party's over," Mace replied.

"I'm afraid not my friend. You're impossibly outnumbered," Dooku said. Mace smirked.

"I don't think so," Mace replied. As he said that, hundreds of light sabers were ignited, all humming in concert with each other. The arena was also surrounded by the Jedi. Obi-Wan grinned.

"See Lea, I told you that help was on the way," Obi-Wan said. Lea rolled her eyes.

"We're not out of the woods yet, Jedi," she replied. Kit Fisto tossed a light saber to Obi-Wan and a blaster to Lea. Aayla Secura tossed two blasters to Anakin and Padme. Kit sliced through the shackles on Obi-Wan, Lea, and Anakin's wrists. And so, the battle between the Jedi and the droids began. Unfortunately, the Jedi were impossibly outnumbered and their numbers began to dwindle.

Obi-Wan fought off the oncoming barrage of blaster bolts flying at them with his saber. The woman next to him fired wildly with her blaster and he found that she was a very good shot. Obi-Wan pulled her out of the way, as the screaming Acklay tried to spear her with its pointy leg. Obi-Wan swiped his saber through two of the Acklay's legs, before bringing his saber up and straight down, piercing the creature in the back.

"Thanks, I owe you one," Lea said.

"Not at all milady, but we should find you some cover somewhere," Obi-Wan replied, as he took her hand, while still blocking blaster bolts.

Anakin grabbed Padme's hand and pulled her into one of the overturned carriages to provide more cover for them.

"You're very good with that blaster, angel," Anakin said playfully. She smiled back.

"You are too Ani, we make quite a team," she replied. He took her free hand in his own.

"That we do angel, that we do," he replied, as they continued to fire at the droids to keep them at bay. The Jedi numbers had dwindled down to less than forty and they, along with Anakin, Padme, and Lea, were being pushed to the center of the arena and surrounded. Count Dooku held up his hands for them to halt.

"Master Windu, you have fought gallantly. Worthy of placement in the archives of the Jedi order. But I'm afraid you are impossibly

outnumbered. Surrender now and your lives will be spared," Dooku said.

"We will not be hostages to be bartered Dooku!" Mace Windu refused his offer. Dooku sighed somewhat sadly.

"Then I'm sorry old friend," Dooku said, as his droids raised their blasters again to continue fighting.

"Look!" Padme called, as she pointed toward the sky. Several transports descended upon the battlefield. Master Yoda stood on the center one and the clone troops took control of the battle, quickly outnumbering the droids. Anakin took Padme's hand and helped her onto the one of the transports.

"Make sure the Senator and her family get to her ship and see that they return to Coruscant safely," Mace told Obi-Wan.

"Is Coruscant safe?" Obi-Wan asked.

"The war has begun and the Chancellor will be calling an emergency session of the Senate. The senator will need to attend, so the council has extended your assignment to protect her," Mace said.

"What about Dooku?" Obi-Wan asked. Mace looked up to the balcony and he was gone.

"He has escaped, but we will find him," Mace replied. Obi-Wan nodded and hopped on the transport with Anakin, Padme and Lea. They ordered the clone soldiers to take them to Padme's ship.

Later, they were safely in hyperspace. The passengers undid their belts once Artoo gave the okay. Anakin went to Padme immediately and began examining the cuts on her back where the nexu had gotten her. She hissed a little, as he examined her back. She had been trying to forget about how painful the lacerations on her back

were, but now that they were safe and she was in his arms, the pain could no longer be ignored.

"These need bacta angel, come on," he kissed her cheek and led her back into the cabin.

"So, you'll be seeing to Padme's security?" Lea asked Obi-Wan.

"Yes, she is still in danger with Nute Gunray on the loose still. What about you? Will you return to Naboo?" Obi-Wan asked.

"I was Padme's chief of staff before the crash and she's already asked me to resume my position, so I'll be wherever she is," Lea replied.

"What about your family? Won't they be anxious to see you?" Obi-Wan asked.

"My parents are dead and have been for about ten years. And since we have a wedding to plan, I'm sure I'll be seeing plenty of them," Lea said, with a smile.

"That you will I'm sure. Both Anakin and Padme's families are very excited about marrying off their youngest children," Obi-Wan said, with a smile. Lea nodded with a smile back.

"Thank you again for saving my life from the Acklay today. I'm very tired and I think I'll retire until we reach Coruscant," Lea said, as she stepped closer to him and kissed his cheek softly.

"Thank you again master Jedi," she said softly, as she left him standing frozen in place, while she retired to her room...

Anakin carefully helped Padme peel off the ruined top of her white uniform. She laid on the bed on her stomach, while Anakin prepared to place the bacta patches on her back.

"This is going to sting quite a bit angel, but it won't last long," he told her tenderly. She nodded and cried out a bit, as he applied the bacta. The painkillers in the bacta started to kick in right away and the cries quickly died on her lips. Anakin smiled, and kissed her cheek, before going to the fresher to wash the bacta off his hands. When he came back, he smiled, as he saw that his angel was already fast asleep. He yawned deeply, suddenly realizing how tired he was. He took Padme's boots off and undressed her the rest of the way, before undressing himself. He pulled on a pair of sleep pants and climbed into bed with her. With a small whimper and without opening her eyes, she snuggled to him. He smiled and put his arms around her, before falling asleep almost instantly.

Return to Coruscant

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here.

AN: Here's chapter 13! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 13: Return to Coruscant

Padme ship arrived back on Coruscant very late that evening. They went straight to Padme's apartment for a good night's sleep. The next morning, Padme woke up early, even though she had been informed that the Senate was in brief recess for a few days. Still, she had several meetings today, though she was happy that she would be conducting them in the comfort of her own apartment. Jar Jar, Bail and Mon Mothma would be by first to brief her of the happenings in the Senate from the past few weeks. Then, Chancellor Palpatine himself had requested to stop by and check with her security, saying he was very concerned for her safety still, being that Nute Gunray and Dooku were still at large. Padme had already cleaned up and left her hair in loose ringlets, before she stood up from her vanity table. She glanced over at Anakin, who was still sleeping peacefully. He looked adorable all sprawled out on his stomach and she decided not to wake him just yet. She donned her blue corded robe and padded out into the living area and then the kitchen. She started brewing her morning caf and then went about starting breakfast for Anakin, Obi-Wan, and Lea. Padme noticed that Obi-Wan was already up and probably had been for about an hour. He and Captain Typho were already checking security, as it probably wouldn't be long before it was well known that she had returned to Coruscant. She hated all the extra security, but at least this time it was Obi-Wan instead of Sev. And he and Lea seemed to get along immensely well, so having him around was just fine with her. Lea strolled into the kitchen about that time, yawning deeply.

"Good morning," Padme said.

"Good morning," she replied, as she accepted the cup of steaming caf from Padme.

"Need any help?" Lea asked, as Padme went about making breakfast.

"I think I've got it. But you could take a cup of caf to Obi-Wan. Goodness knows how long he's been up, he could probably use some," Padme replied, as she poured another cup. Lea smiled.

"I'd be happy to," Lea said, as she took both cups and went out to the living area. Anakin came in not long after that, having smelled the food. He came up and wrapped his arms around her waist, burying his face in her curls. He inhaled and placed soft kisses along her neck. She giggled and turned in his embrace, to kiss him fully on the lips.

"Good morning Ani," she said.

"Morning angel. The food smells wonderful," he said, with a sleepy smile.

"I thought that might get you up," she teased, as she went back to making breakfast. A few minutes later, the four of them sat down to eat together.

"Padme, I took the liberty of leaving one of your extra comm stations with Anakin's mother before I left Tatooine. You two might want to contact her after breakfast," Obi-Wan said.

"Oh thank you Obi-Wan, I was wondering how in the world we were going to get a hold of them. They must be worried sick about us," Padme replied.

"Thank you Obi-Wan, I appreciate that," Anakin told him. Obi-Wan nodded.

"This is delicious Padme, I didn't know you could cook," Obi-Wan teased.

"I may be a Senator, but you don't grow up with Jobal Naberrie as a mother and not learn your way around in the kitchen," Padme replied.

"It is wonderful Padme. You cook as good as mom," Anakin said, in between shoveling bites into his mouth.

"Thank you sweetheart," Padme replied.

After breakfast, Anakin and Padme contacted the Lars family. They were overjoyed to hear that both Anakin and Padme were safe and sound on Coruscant. After a nice conversation with Beru and Shmi, they ended the transmission to contact Padme's family. Lea was there and the celebration was two-fold, as the Naberrie's discovered that the niece they had thought was gone was actually alive. Jobal and Sola insisted that they start planning the wedding soon, so it was decided that they would leave for Coruscant in three days. Anakin would travel to Tatooine to pick up his mother and bring her to the capital too. He was really looking forward to getting her off that dust ball for a while and Padme was excited to get the chance to pamper Shmi a bit, knowing what a hard life she had led. After the lengthy conversations with their families, Lea began helping Padme into one of her formal gowns for her meetings. Soon, Bail and Mon Mothma arrived, along with Jar Jar.

"It's good to see that you're safe Padme," Bail greeted.

"Thank you Bail. You remember my cousin Lea," Padme replied. Bail looked shocked.

"Yes, but I thought she had died?" Bail asked. Lea smiled.

"Long story Senator Organa. It is good to see you again. And it's nice to see you again as well Senator Mothma," Lea replied.

"Likewise," Mon Mothma replied.

"This is my fiancé, Anakin Skywalker," Padme introduced. Bail was shocked again.

"It's good to meet you Anakin, this certainly is a surprise Padme," Bail said, as he shook Anakin's hand.

"Thank you Senator Organa. It is nice to meet you both. Padme speaks very highly of you," Anakin replied.

"When will your wedding take place?" Mon asked. Padme smiled and squeezed his hand.

"We haven't set a date yet, but we are going to begin planning it very soon. We are going to probably shoot for this spring months from now. We'd like to get married sooner, but with the mess in the Senate, I don't think that would be possible," Padme replied.

"Ani, little Ani?" Jar Jar asked. Anakin laughed.

"It nice to see you again Jar Jar," he replied.

"Ani, meesa so happy to see yousa!" Jar Jar exclaimed, as he squeezed Anakin in a bone crushing hug.

Oof, it's good to you too Jar Jar," Anakin replied, after he got his air back. The meeting progressed without any problems, as Bail and Mon Mothma informed Padme of the current situations. As the two Senators were meeting, Chancellor Palpatine was coming.

"Senator Amidala, it does my heart good to see you well. Especially after that horrible ordeal on Dantooine," Palpatine said.

"Thank you Chancellor, please sit and make yourself comfortable," Padme offered. The Chancellor sat down and noticed two people in the room that he did no recognize.

"Padme, you must introduce me to your friends," Palpatine said.

"Chancellor, this is my cousin, Lea. And this is my fiancé, Anakin Skywalker," Padme replied.

"Fiancé? How wonderful! When will this blessed event be taking place?" Palpatine asked.

"We haven't set a date as of yet, but we are aiming for a spring wedding," Padme replied.

"I would love to attend," Palpatine replied.

"Of course Chancellor, we would be honored," Padme replied. The Chancellor had a small briefing for her and needed to leave not long after.

"Senator, I hope you and your fiancé will be at my gala tonight," Palpatine said.

"I wasn't aware that there was a gala tonight," Padme replied.

"Oh yes, to celebrate our grand victories in shutting down the droid factories on Geonosis and Dantooine, thus securing those planets from the Separatists. Your attendance would be most appreciated," Palpatine said. Padme did not look happy, but graciously accepted.

"Of course Chancellor. Anakin and I will be there," Padme replied.

"Good and your cousin is welcome as well," he said, as he bid them farewell and left for his next meeting.

"Senator, I'm not so sure it will be safe for you at the gala," Obi-Wan protested.

"I'm not excited about it either, but I must attend, unfortunately. I'll have Anakin with me and you'll be there as well," Padme replied.

"Senator, while it is not uncommon for Jedi to make appearances at these gatherings, I don't believe it is wise for me make an appearance as your security," Obi-Wan argued, eyeing Anakin for a

little help. Anakin shrugged, indicating that he wasn't about to argue with his future wife, not when she was in Senator mode anyway.

"You won't be going as my security. You'll be Lea's escort. Now, if you'll excuse me Master Kenobi, I must be getting ready. Ani, I'll come help you with your attire once I'm done," Padme said, as she excused herself. Lea and Dorme followed her into her bedroom, where they would be preparing for the evening.

"You know, you could have jumped in there and helped me anytime," Obi-Wan scolded Anakin.

"I'm not going to argue with her. Not when she's like that. I'll end up sleeping on the couch if I do," Anakin replied.

"Oh poor little bantha cub," Obi-Wan replied sarcastically.

"This is ridiculous! Jedi do not escort Senatorial aids to grand galas!" Obi-Wan complained. Anakin rolled his eyes.

"Lighten up Obi-Wan. What are you so afraid of? That you'll have a good time with Lea?" Anakin joked.

" *Yes,"* Obi-Wan said silently.

"How do you think I feel? Little former slave boys from Tatooine don't escort Senators to grand galas either, but I'm doing it, because Padme loves me. And who knows, I might have fun too," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan sighed.

"Fine, I'll be there, but only because I have been assigned to your future wife's protection," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin grinned.

"Anakin, since we have some time now, there are some things I'd like to talk to you about, if you don't mind," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin shrugged and nodded, as they went out onto the veranda.

"Master Kenobi, you have a message from the Jedi Council," Typho said, just as they were about to start talking.

"Thank you Captain. I guess our talk will have to wait until later Anakin," Obi-Wan said, as he left to take the message.

Much later, Obi-Wan returned, dressed in his formal Jedi robes. The council had heard of the gala and insisted that Obi-Wan attend. Mace Windu and Yoda would also be attending at the request of the Chancellor as well. Dorme had done Padme's hair first and then she had come to help Anakin dress in his tux. Anakin looked at himself in the mirror with uncertainty.

"Oh Ani, you look so handsome. Not that you don't always," Padme said, as she kissed him.

"I've never worn anything like this before. It feels weird," Anakin replied. She laughed and kissed him again.

"You'll get used to it my love," she said, as she smoothed his unruly, shoulder length sandy blonde hair. There was a knock and Dorme entered.

"Milady, we must get you dressed," Dorme said. Padme nodded and shooed Anakin out.

"You look very handsome Anakin," Dorme complimented. He blushed shyly.

"Thank you Dorme," Anakin said, as he left the room.

"You are a very lucky woman milady," Dorme said. Padme smiled.

"I know, he is very handsome, isn't he?" Padme replied.

"Goodness yes. I would love to see how you're going to keep the other women off him tonight. The female Senators will probably try to eat him alive," Dorme replied.

"Don't worry, I'll make sure to make it clear that he's mine to any of the man-eaters that dare to come near him," Padme replied, with a smirk.

Lea came out of her room in a stunning jade green dress, which was slit on both sides. It was form fitting and the neckline dipped down in a v shape. Her hair was done up in a decorative bun with two ringlets of hair framing her face.

"You look beautiful Lea," Anakin said.

"Thank you Anakin," she replied.

"Yes, you look very beautiful milady," Obi-Wan said, as his eyes locked on her.

"Thank you Obi-Wan," Lea replied. Padme came out next and it was Anakin's turn to be stunned. Her gown was a beautiful royal blue with a full skirt. The collar was low and heart shaped across her bosom and the dress was nearly backless. Her hair was pulled back in an elaborate twist and fastened with sparkling hair pins.

"Padme, you look...wow..." Anakin stuttered. She walked up to him and kissed his cheek.

"Thank you Ani," she replied, as she looped her arm in his. Captain Typho shuttled them to the Senate building where the gala was being help in the ball room...

The Chancellor's Gala

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars. It's George's sandbox. I just play here.

AN: Thanks for all the great reviews! Enjoy the chapter!

Never Gone

Chapter 14: The Chancellor's Gala

Padme groaned as they entered the ball room. As she suspected, the entrance was crawling with holonet cameras and reporters. The reporters spotted her and began firing questions at her, while their cameras began rolling.

"Senator Amidala, rumor has it that Nute Gunray has increased the bounty on your head. How do you plan to deal with this threat?" one reporter asked.

"My security and the Jedi will see to my protection," Padme answered shortly.

"Senator, who is your handsome escort?" a female reporter asked, while eyeing Anakin up and down. And Padme then remembered why she loathed the holonet gossip reporters.

" *Hands off you prowling nexu,"* Padme growled to herself. She gripped Anakin's arm tighter and gave them the truth, an answer which they wouldn't be expecting. She had often been portrayed as a cold, business woman with no time or want for a personal life. While that was the impression she may have given off, this would be one reputation she would enjoy changing.

"This is my fiancé, Anakin Skywalker. Now, if you'll excuse us," Padme said, as she and Anakin headed into the ballroom, leaving

the buzzing reporters behind. Anakin looked perplexed by the entire spectacle.

"Don't worry Ani, you'll get used to this too. It's all a part of being in the public eye," she replied, easing his nervousness a bit. Padme and Anakin, along with Lea and Obi-Wan began making the rounds to greet some of Padme colleagues. A while later, Obi-Wan and Anakin stood off to the side while Padme and Lea conversed with some of Padme's friends. Obi-Wan gulped down the last of his third drink and decided it was time to talk with Anakin.

"Geez Obi-Wan, how do you drink this stuff so fast and not get drunk?" Anakin asked, as his drink was refilled only for the second time. Obi-Wan chuckled.

"Experience, my very young friend," he replied.

"So, what did you want to talk to me about earlier?" Anakin asked.

"Anakin, since we met again, I've sensed how strongly the Force imparts to you. I realize that a lot of that has to do with your extremely high midichlorian count. But that still doesn't explain how you knew how to do some of the things I've seen you do," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin shrugged.

"I don't know, I just listen to the Force and do what it tells me to do," Anakin replied.

"You say that like you're actually hearing a voice," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin looked at him nervously.

"I am," he replied.

"What are you so nervous about telling me?" Obi-Wan asked.

"You're not going to like what I tell you, that's why I'd rather not," Anakin replied.

"Anakin, I'm not going to be angry with you for telling me the truth," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin took a deep breath.

"Okay then. I hear the Force through Master Qui-Gon. He's the one that's been guiding me all these years and he's the one that instructs me on how to use the Force," Anakin told him honestly. Obi-Wan's face betrayed no emotion, but Anakin could tell that the news was shocking to Obi-Wan.

"Anakin...I don't really think that's possible. Qui-Gon Jinn is dead. I saw him murdered before my own eyes," Obi-Wan replied, carefully controlling the emotion in his voice.

"I know...I didn't think it was possible at first either, at least since I wasn't a Jedi. Doesn't...doesn't he speak to you too?" Anakin asked hesitantly.

"No," Obi-Wan replied coldly. Anakin winced. He had been afraid of this and he wasn't really sure why Qui-Gon had chosen to speak to him and not Obi-Wan.

"I'm sorry Obi-Wan, I don't know what to say. I didn't ask for this. But the powers that I've used have helped me save Padme, so I'm not sorry for that," Anakin replied.

"But you are not a Jedi and you should be very careful about using such powers that you do not understand," Obi-Wan replied.

"But I am learning to..." Anakin started, but Obi-Wan cut him off.

"No, you do not understand. Using the Force the way you do takes years of careful training, which you have not had. It is dangerous for you to use such powers that you do not fully understand. You've answered my questions, but if you'll excuse me now, I need another drink," Obi-Wan said, as he walked off. Anakin stared after him, wondering what he had done. Lea had watched the whole exchange with much interest and excused herself to find Obi-Wan. She found

Obi-Wan outside on the terrace downing what was probably his fourth or fifth drink.

"Careful Kenobi, or you'll be in no condition to perform security if you keep downing those," Lea warned.

"Excuse me Lea, but I'd like to be alone right now," Obi-Wan replied.

"And I'd like a million credits," Lea replied sarcastically.

"What in the world did Anakin say to you that could make you so upset?" Lea asked.

"It's nothing Anakin did, it's not really his fault," Obi-Wan replied.

"Well, from the crestfallen look on his face, he sure thinks it is. He may be marrying my cousin Obi-Wan, but he's still young and impressionable. Don't you see how much he looks up to you?" Lea asked.

"I thought I asked to be alone," Obi-Wan replied.

"Well, we don't always get what we want, now do we?" Lea responded shortly, as she shivered from the cool night air.

"You're freezing, you should go back inside," Obi-Wan insisted.

"I'm fine," she replied.

"At least take my cloak then," Obi-Wan replied. She looked at him and then nodded, allowing him to place it around her shoulders.

"Thanks," she replied, as she took the drink from his hand and gulped it down. Obi-Wan looked at her incredulously.

"Force, slow down, or you'll be drunk in no time. That's pure Corellian brandy," Obi-Wan said. Lea scoffed.

"Please Jedi, I bet I could drink you under the table," Lea replied. Obi-Wan smirked.

"I doubt that. I hold my liquor well," Obi-Wan replied.

"As do I, master Jedi," she replied slyly. The way she said master Jedi sent a shiver up Obi-Wan's spine. Before he knew what was happening, her lips were inching closer to his. He did nothing to stop it when her lips brushed his. He started to kiss back, when he suddenly realized what was happening. He pulled away quickly and stepped back.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that," Obi-Wan replied quickly, as he fled from the terrace, leaving a confused Lea behind...

Anakin sighed and finished his second glass of wine. He looked over at his angel, who was looking back at him, pleading with her eyes for him to come save her. She was trapped talking to a human senator, at least twenty years her senior. Anakin watched the man's eyes roam over Padme's body, while he carried on some inane conversation with her. Anakin set his glass down and stalked over to them.

"You look very beautiful tonight Senator. Can I interest you in a drink with me outside on the terrace," the other Senator asked smoothly. Padme smiled, as she saw Anakin approaching.

"I'm going to have to decline that offer Senator," Padme replied shortly, as Anakin came up beside her, sliding his arm around her waist.

"Senator Turles, have you met my fiancé Anakin Skywalker?" Padme asked innocently, enjoying the look of disappointment on the man's face.

"No, it's nice to meet you Anakin," the man faked a smile, as he shook Anakin's hand. Anakin stared into him with his piercing blue

eyes and squeezed his hand, trying to intimidating him. It worked, as the senator tried to release his hand from Anakin's vice-like grip.

"It was nice meeting you Senator," Anakin replied, as he led Padme away. Padme giggled, once they were out of earshot.

"I don't think he'll be bothering you again, angel," Anakin replied, with a smile. Anakin pulled her out onto the dance floor and pulled her close, as they began dancing. Padme was vaguely aware of the holonet cameras that had been following them all night, but she didn't really care if they saw this new side of her anymore. The man who held her in his arms had turned the stoic, cold Senator Amidala into a passionate, hopelessly in love Senator Amidala and Padme liked the new change.

"What's bothering you Ani?" she asked.

"It's Obi-Wan, I upset him and I didn't mean to," Anakin replied.

"How did you upset him?" Padme asked.

"Well, you remember how I told you about Qui-Gon?" Anakin asked. She nodded.

"Obi-Wan asked me some questions about how I was able to use the Force so well, so I told him," Anakin replied.

"And he didn't take it well," Padme finished. Anakin nodded.

"Ani, you didn't do anything wrong. Obi-Wan will come around," Padme assure him.

"I hope so," he replied, with a sigh.

"This boring gala is winding down. I think we should be able to slip out now, if you want," Padme said, biting her lips playfully.

"Please. No offense angel, but these parties are pretty boring," Anakin replied.

"I know, I hate them too, love. So what do you say we go home...and make a party of our own?" Padme asked, her eyes locking with his. Anakin saw the hunger in her eyes and felt the heat spread through his body. They met up with Obi-Wan and Lea at the door. Both noticed the thick tension between them, but neither seemed to want to talk about it.

The ride home was silent and the tension between Obi-Wan and Lea thick enough to slice with a light saber. Padme wondered what in the world could have happened between them to cause this, but her cousin was very distant. Padme knew she would open up when she was ready, so for tonight, she decided to focus on the handsome man standing next to her. She smiled and took Anakin's hand, leading him into the bedroom...

Lea changed into her nightgown and climbed into bed. She couldn't stop thinking about that kiss. It was still burning on her lips. He had started to kiss back, but then pulled away so suddenly. She tossed and turned, trying to get comfortable, but her eyes refused to close and she laid wide awake, knowing sleep would not come easy tonight. Little did she know, she was not the only one having trouble sleeping...

In the spare bedroom down the hall, Obi-Wan laid wide awake as well. The kiss she had given him had impacted him much more than he wanted to admit. Jedi were not supposed to feel like this! He tossed and turned some more, before finally giving up on sleep and going out to the terrace. Perhaps some meditation would help him clear his thoughts...and feelings...

Forbidden Love

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AN: Thanks for all the great reviews! Enjoy the chapter!

Never Gone

Chapter 15: Forbidden Love

Three days had passed since the Gala. Anakin was returning this morning with his mother and Padme's own mother and sister would be arriving soon too. Obi-Wan had made himself scarce the last three days. He performed his duties of security without being seen and had taken to eating his meals alone. She knew that it bothered Anakin and he still felt like it was his fault that Obi-Wan had distanced himself. But Padme had an inkling that it was more than that and she knew it had something to do with Lea. So, she had taken it upon herself to have a talk with him this morning herself.

"You wanted to see me Senator?" Obi-Wan asked formally.

"Yes, I was hoping you would escort me down to the lift to meet my mother and sister since Ani isn't back yet. He wouldn't like me going alone," Padme replied.

"Of course Senator and he would be correct, you shouldn't go alone," Obi-Wan replied. Padme nodded, as they left her apartment and headed for the elevator.

Obi-Wan, did Anakin do something that has upset you?" Padme asked bluntly. Obi-Wan sighed.

"No senator, it's not really his fault," Obi-Wan replied.

"This is about Qui-Gon, isn't it?" Padme asked.

"He told you?" Obi-Wan asked. Padme smiled.

"Ani tells me everything. And he really couldn't hide anything from me even if he wanted to," Padme replied.

"I shouldn't let it bother me, but it does hurt a little that he would speak to Anakin and not to me," Obi-Wan admitted.

"Well, a little bit of advice from something I've learned in the Senate. You have to be listening in order to hear the truth," Padme replied. Obi-Wan sighed.

"Obi-Wan, I think there is more going on here than whatever Anakin said to you. And I think it has something to do with Lea," Padme replied.

"What did she tell you?" Obi-Wan demanded.

"Nothing, but you two have been avoiding each other like the plague," Padme replied.

"I am at your apartment to do my job Senator. There is nothing going on between us," Obi-Wan replied. Padme decided to drop it since she obviously wasn't getting anywhere with Obi-Wan. She would just have to drag the truth out of Lea. The Naberrie family ship landed in the docking bay at 500 Republica and Padme waited for them to walk down the ramp.

"Padme!" Jobal cried, as ran to her daughter and hugged her tightly.

"I missed you mom," Padme said.

"I missed you too honey. Where's Anakin?" Jobal asked.

"He's should be returning from Tatooine any time with his mother. Then, I'm going to take us all out to dinner tonight. That includes you Obi-Wan," Padme ordered. Obi-Wan was about to decline, but Jobal interrupted him.

"Are you the Jedi that is responsible for seeing that Anakin, Padme, and Lea got out of that horrible situation on Dantooine?" Jobal asked.

"Um, yes Mrs. Naberrie, I am Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi," he replied.

"Well, then I should thank you Obi-Wan. And please call me Jobal," she replied, as she shook his hand.

"Well little sister, don't I get a hug?" Sola asked, as she lugged her travel case down the ramp.

"Of course, it's so good to see you Sola," Padme said, as she hugged her older sister tightly.

"It good to see you too little sister. We have a lot of catching up to do. I want details, details, details," Sola laughed. Padme rolled her eyes and helped with her sister's cases. They took the elevator back up to the apartment, where Lea was anxiously waiting.

"Lea!" Jobal exclaimed, as they entered the apartment. Lea ran and hugged her.

"It's so good to see you Aunt Jobal," Lea said.

"We've missed you darling," Jobal said. Lea hugged Sola next, before her eyes fell on Obi-Wan for the first time in three days. Their eyes locked for a moment, before both quickly looked away. Padme settled her mother and Sola in two of the guest rooms. She was infinitely glad that her spacious apartment flat contained six bedrooms, just enough for her mother, Sola, Shmi, Lea and Obi-Wan. She decided that now would be a good time to talk to Lea. She found her cousin in her room.

"Can I come in?" Padme asked.

"Of course," Lea replied.

"Lea, what exactly happened between you and Obi-Wan the other night?" Padme asked. Lea froze.

"Nothing, why do you ask?" Lea replied.

"Lea, I know something is going on and I think you'll feel better if you talk about it," Padme replied. Lea looked at her uncertainly, as she sat down on the bed.

"We kissed," Lea confessed.

"What?" Padme asked.

"The other night, after Obi-Wan stalked off at the gala. I followed him on to the terrace and we talked a bit. Then, the next thing I know, we were kissing. He suddenly pulled away and apologized for letting it happen and left. We haven't spoke since," Lea said miserably.

"And you're miserable now," Padme concluded. Lea nodded.

"I think I love him," Lea said, as tears started to slide down her cheeks. Padme hugged her tightly, as she began to cry.

"But he's a Jedi...and nothing can ever happen between us," Lea cried, as Padme held her.

A couple hours later, Padme's comlink beeped and she eagerly turned it on.

"Anakin?" she asked.

" *How were you positive it was me angel?"* she heard him laugh.

"Lucky guess my love. Have you arrived yet?" she asked.

" *We just got landing clearance, so I'll see you at the docking bay in a few minutes,"* Anakin replied. Padme almost leapt up and announced Anakin's arrival to everyone.

"Ani's back, come on!" she urged everyone. Jobal and Sola chuckled and followed her, along with Obi-Wan and Lea who were still avoiding each other's glances.

Anakin dropped the ramp and helped his mother down, while carrying her travel case. Once they were down the ramp, Anakin set the case down just in time to catch Padme as she threw herself into his arms. Anakin laughed and spun her around.

"Did you miss me?" he asked playfully.

"Terribly," she replied, as she kissed him passionately. They broke apart and Padme blushed.

"Hello Shmi," Padme said. Shmi smiled and hugged Padme.

"Hello sweetheart, it's good to see you," Shmi replied with a warm smile.

Padme helped Shmi settle in her room, while they chatted.

"Shmi, I'm taking all of us out to dinner tonight. I wasn't sure if you had a dress, so I picked something up for you," Padme said, as she reached into the closet and pulled out a dress. It was a simple, yet elegant plum colored dress with thick straps and a beaded design along the modest, yet flattering collar. The dress was long with slim.

"Oh Padme, you didn't have to do that," Shmi said, as she stared at the beautiful dress.

"I wanted to Shmi. You're Anakin's mother and you're going to be my mother too. Let me spoil you a little," Padme said with a smile. Shmi hugged her.

"Thank you darling," Shmi replied.

"You're welcome. There are some matching shoes in the closet. I better go get ready myself though, because then I'll have to help Ani. It's quite funny to watch him try to put on a tux," Padme chuckled. Shmi laughed heartily.

"Oh what Owen wouldn't do to have the opportunity to see *that* ," Shmi replied.

"Ani would never live it down," Padme said, as she strolled to her room.

Anakin was dressed in his tux and now he and Obi-Wan were just waiting on the women.

"Obi-Wan, I'm really sorry for the other night. I'm really hoping we can still be friends," Anakin said. Obi-Wan sighed.

"You don't have anything to apologize for Anakin, it is me that should apologize. I lashed out at you for something that wasn't really your fault and I'm sorry," Obi-Wan replied.

"It's forgotten," Anakin told him. Obi-Wan smiled.

"Obi-Wan, I was wondering if you would consider being my best man in our wedding?" Anakin asked. Obi-Wan was truly touched, but he knew that he couldn't let himself get anymore attached than he already was.

"I'm truly touched that you think so highly of me Anakin...but I'm afraid that I will have to decline. My duties will probably not allow me the time and I don't even know if I will be able to attend. But I wish you and Padme well," Obi-Wan replied, hating every inch of himself at the moment. Anakin pretended not to be hurt and tried to hide his disappointment.

"Oh...okay, I understand. You're a Jedi after all, I shouldn't have assumed that you would have the time anyway," Anakin gave him a

fake smile and casually walked away. Obi-Wan carefully hid his own hurt behind his well developed, emotionless, Jedi mask.

Dinner was going well, as far as Obi-Wan could tell anyway. Jobal, Sola, and Shmi had hit it off famously. Currently, they were exchanging embarrassing stories about Anakin and Padme's childhood. Obi-Wan found himself laughing along. Lea was too, but he could tell that she was off in her own world, as her smile didn't quite reach her eyes. Fortunately, Anakin and Padme were too absorbed in each other to notice the very embarrassing stories that were being told. They were at a very high class restaurant in a private room at the back of the restaurant where they saw that the Senator was not bothered by spectators or reporters. Padme giggled, as Anakin fed her another bite of desert off his fork and then took one himself. They were practically nauseating. So why did he find himself longing for something like that? For the first time ever, he found himself questioning the code. Why was this kind of thing bad? He shook those thoughts from his head, as everyone stood up. It was getting late and they left for Padme's apartment.

Obi-Wan stood on Padme's veranda a few hours later. Once again, sleep had escaped him. He tried meditation, but he could not acquire the concentration that meditation took tonight. His mind drifted back to Lea and he grit his teeth in annoyance. She had looked extremely beautiful in her elegant black dress tonight and he could not pry his mind from her. Suddenly, he heard faint footfalls behind him and he turned only to find Lea there.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't think anyone would be out here at this hour. I couldn't sleep," she said.

"Me either," Obi-Wan admitted. Lea took a shaky breath and came to stand beside him.

"Obi-Wan, I think we need to talk," Lea said.

"What about? Nothing can ever happen between us," Obi-Wan replied.

"Why?" she asked. Obi-Wan looked at her incredulously.

"Why! I'm a Jedi! This sort of thing is forbidden by the code!" Obi-Wan replied harshly.

"You know, this code you speak of seems that it would be more suited for droids rather than human beings. Does your council really expect Jedi to be emotionless warriors with nothing other than duty to fill their lives?" Lea asked.

"Yes," Obi-Wan answered quietly.

"Well, I don't see an emotionless warrior when I see you. I see a man whose heart is filled with love that he wants to give, but feels like he can't, because he's bound by duty. I love you Obi-Wan and I want your love," Lea told him passionately. Obi-Wan stared into her light brown eyes.

"Lea, I can't. Don't you see? We can't!" Obi-Wan cried, though his resolve was fading fast, as the sweet scent from her hair wafted toward him.

"Fine. Then look me in the eyes and tell me that you don't love me. Tell me you don't love me back and I'll never bother you again," Lea said, as she stood mere inches from him. And Obi-Wan couldn't do it. He couldn't tell a lie to her, for he didn't have the strength. Nor did he have the desire to rip her heart out, for doing so would rip out his own.

"I can't...I can't because I love...I love you too," Obi-Wan stuttered.

"Then be with me," Lea whispered.

"If the council found out, I would be expelled. I know nothing else Lea. I don't know how to be anything else except a Jedi," Obi-Wan

replied. Then Lea realized that he was afraid...afraid of what his love for her would mean.

"They never have to know. We'll love each other in private. Only Anakin and Padme have to know. They'll help us hide it, I know they will," Lea urged. The Jedi in him was screaming no in his head so loud that his ears were pounding. But the man in him was quickly defeating the Jedi, as her lips edged closer to his. As they met, all rational thought began to leave Obi-Wan's mind, as everything about her began to invade his senses. The pent up desire and sexual frustration began to take them over, as their kisses turned from tender to desperate and furious. Obi-Wan lifted her into his arms, while stumbling back inside and managing to find his way to her room...

Our Secret

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here, cause it's fun.

AN: Here's chapter 16! Enjoy and let me know what you think.

Never Gone

Chapter 16: Our Secret

Lea yawned and raised her head from her pillow. She knew it was very early, but Obi-Wan was already up and meditating by the window. The sun was just beginning to peak over the horizon. She got up and donned her robe, before padding over to him and wrapping her arms around his waist. He smiled and opened his eyes, before leaning down and pressing a soft kiss on her lips. She frowned when she saw the pensive look on Obi-Wan's face.

"What's wrong? You're not regretting last night, are you?" she asked. He pulled her closer in response.

"Of course not. I was completely serious when I told you I loved you and I do. I'm just...worried about some things," Obi-Wan replied.

"I'll talk to Padme later this morning. I know we can trust her and Anakin with this," Lea replied.

"It's not that so much," Obi-Wan replied.

"Then what is it?" Lea asked.

"I have to report to the Council today and I'm not sure how much longer this assignment will last. The war is escalating," Obi-Wan said.

"But isn't Padme still in a lot of danger?" Lea asked.

"Possibly, but there have been no attempts on her life since we returned to Coruscant," Obi-Wan replied.

"I...I can't stand the thought of you going to war," Lea said, as she choked back a sob. Obi-Wan hugged her tightly.

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves. If that possibility comes, then you have to believe that I will come back to you," Obi-Wan assured her. She looked up into his eyes before kissing him deeply.

"Now, no more tears this morning. I better slip out before anyone else gets up," Obi-Wan said. Lea nodded and kissed him again, before he slipped out and went to start his morning rounds on security.

Obi-Wan stood on the veranda, as the very early morning sun shone through. Security was quiet and he took the time to enjoy his morning meditation. Something was lighter in his spirit this morning. He knew what it was. He knew that it was love, but he had never imagined love would feel like this. Love was something to be denied by the Jedi, seemingly as it had no place in the life of servitude to the people. It was seen as a weakness and one that could lead to the dark side. But he was seeing a different side of love now. He saw the sense of strength, completeness and fulfillment that this emotion brought to him. He now fully understood that look that Anakin got in his eyes every time he looked at Padme, for now it was how Obi-Wan looked at Lea. Love felt so right! Why did his masters shun emotion? He knew that were cases where the loss of a loved one had driven one to the dark side. But was forbidding the emotion and attachment really the answer?

It's good to see that you are finally opening your eyes padawan," a ghostly voice spoke. Obi-Wan's eyes widened, as he saw his dead master's Force spirit standing before him.

"Master?" Obi-Wan asked in astonishment.

"I'm afraid I have a bit of explaining to do Obi-Wan. I know that you've always felt that I favored Anakin over you. That isn't true Obi-Wan. I know I should have come to you earlier, but I needed to make sure you were ready to hear the things I have to tell you," Qui-Gon told him.

"No master, it wasn't right for me to feel jealous of Anakin. I am sorry," Obi-Wan replied.

"There's no need to be sorry Obi-Wan. Perhaps, I was a bit hasty in insisting that he be trained. But do not mistake, he is the chosen one, though you were not ready to train someone like him. Now you are I believe," Qui-Gon replied.

"You want me to train Anakin behind the council's back? Master, isn't that dangerous? If the Sith were to find out he's being trained, they could try to turn him," Obi-Wan asked.

"Obi-Wan, the Jedi have become complacent. They are serving a Republic that no longer functions in the best interest of the people and they refuse to change. The Sith have adapted so well that they are able to conceal themselves from the Jedi. But they will not be able to hide from Anakin very long, for he is already sensing the dark tremors. He is unsure what they are and does not know if he can talk to you anymore. His love for Padme is his greatest strength, but also his greatest weakness. He needs your guidance, especially since you now share this situation with him," Qui-Gon replied. Obi-Wan lowered his head.

"That is my fault again. I have closed off from him lately, because I feared I was becoming too attached. I was beginning to like having him around. He's like the little brother I never had," Obi-Wan gave a small smile. Qui-Gon chuckled.

"Don't worry Obi-Wan, Anakin will forgive you. Remember, you both share something in common now. Anakin may be the one prophesied to bring balance to the Force, but the prophecy says nothing about him doing it alone. But with yours and Padme's

complete support, I know he will fulfill his destiny. Your training of Anakin will be discreet," Qui-gon told him.

"But master, what if the council gives me a new assignment? Padme seems to be out of danger, and while I don't want her to be in danger, I can't train Anakin if I'm in the outer rim fighting," Obi-Wan said. Qui-Gon smiled slyly.

"You may want to read the petition Padme will be submitting to the Chancellor today then. It will upset the loyalists immensely. And Gunray has still not given up on his revenge against her," Qui-Gon replied. Obi-Wan suppressed a frustrated sigh. He knew that Padme and her allies were trying to do what was best for the Republic, but they were playing a dangerous game. He was worried for both she and Anakin. He decided to inform Captain Typho to increase security watches immediately.

" *I've always been proud of you Obi-Wan, and I always will be,"* Qui-Gon said, as he faded.

"Thank you master," Obi-Wan replied.

Padme yawned deeply and stretched her arms over her head. She snuggled against Anakin's chest and placed a kiss on his neck. She kissed his lips and he smiled. She smiled at him, before getting up and going to the fresher. She came out a few minutes later in her robe and quietly slipped out of their bedroom and headed for the kitchen.

Shmi and Jobal were working busily in the kitchen, while Lea and Sola chatted at the table.

"Good morning little sister," Sola said cheerily.

"Good morning," Padme said, as she sat down. Shmi poured her a cup of caf and set it down for her.

"Thank you Shmi," Padme replied.

"Where's Anakin?" Lea asked.

"He's still asleep," Padme answered, just as Sola giggled.

"What are you reading?" Padme asked Sola, who had a data pad in her hand.

"You and Anakin are all over these holo tabloids, little sister," Sola laughed. Padme groaned.

"Oh don't listen to anything they say Sola, they're terrible," Padme chided.

"Oh I don't know. Some of these headlines are quite creative," Sola teased.

"Like this one: Amidala attends gala with sexy stranger. Or this one: Engaged! Amidala announces intentions to marry handsome escort," Sola teased. Padme rolled her eyes.

"I hate holonet reporters," Padme grumbled. Sola chuckled and then spotted something on Padme's neck.

"What is that on your neck?" Sola asked, as she pushed Padme's curls out of the way. Padme quickly covered her neck back up with her hair.

"Nothing," Padme replied.

"Oh that's not nothing little sister. You certainly are a lucky woman," Sola giggled. Padme blushed. She remembered last night's antics very visually. Needless to say, she and Anakin had a little too much wine.

"Padme, breakfast will be ready in about ten minutes," Shmi announced. Grateful for the escape, Padme stood up.

"I'll go wake Ani," Padme replied. Sola laughed under her breath.

"I bet you will," she whispered. Lea couldn't help but laugh, but she was certainly glad Sola didn't know about what she and Obi-Wan had done last night or Sola's teasing would shift to her.

Padme came into their room, just in time to see that Anakin was awake.

"Morning sweetie," Padme said, as she sat down on the bed beside him.

"Morning angel," he replied, as she kissed him.

"Breakfast is almost ready," Padme said.

"Great, I'm starved. Do you have to be at the Senate today?" Anakin asked.

"No, we're still in recess until tomorrow. I do have that meeting with the Chancellor later this afternoon though,. Do you think you might come with me?" Padme replied.

"Of course, I read your proposal and while I agree with you of course, I worry about your safety," Anakin said.

"I know, that's why I'm glad you've become part of my security," Padme said, as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

"Well, who better to protect you than someone who is with you all the time. Besides, I'm still worried about your safety. I feel that Nute Gunray won't stop his attempts to have you killed, so I feel better if I'm there with you," Anakin replied. She kissed him tenderly.

"I feel better too," she said, as she released him and started walking toward the door.

He got up and donned his sleep pants and robe, before following her out.

After breakfast, Lea quietly pulled Padme aside and to her room.

"What is it Lea?" Padme asked.

"Padme, I have something to tell you and it has to be a secret. The only other person you can tell is Anakin," Lea replied. Padme looked at her with concern, before sitting down on the bed beside her.

"What it is?" Padme asked.

"Last night...Obi-Wan and I admitted our feelings for each other. We need your help Padme. Obi-Wan and I trust you and Anakin, but this has to kept a secret," Lea said nervously. Padme smiled and hugged her.

"Of course we'll help you," Padme replied.

"You're...you're okay with this? Even though he's a Jedi?" Lea asked.

"Lea, there is nothing wrong with being in love. I know that it has to be scary to be in love with someone who supposedly isn't supposed to love, but the heart makes you do crazy things," Padme giggled. Lea smiled.

"Thank you for understanding," Lea said.

"Of course I understand. Think about it Lea, Anakin was almost a Jedi himself," Padme replied.

"Do you think you would have fallen in love with Anakin if he was a Jedi?" Lea asked. Padme didn't even hesitate.

"I know I would have. I couldn't imagine spending my life with anyone else. I'm sure that if Anakin were a Jedi, I would be feeling the same apprehension as you are," Padme replied.

"We can't let the Council find out. They would expel Obi-Wan," Lea said, as a tear slipped down her cheek.

"What is it Lea?" Padme asked.

"Obi-Wan said that he has to meet with the Council today. The war is escalating and he thinks they may dispatch him to the outer rim," Lea cried. Padme hugged her tightly.

"Oh Lea, I'm so sorry. But we don't know that yet. They may feel that I still need the protection, especially after my meeting with the Chancellor today," Padme said. She didn't know what she would do without Anakin, so she couldn't imagine what Lea would go through if Obi-Wan went to war.

"Thank you Padme, I think I'm going to take a warm bath," Lea said, as she left for the fresher. Padme nodded and left for her bedroom.

Padme smirked and shed her robe upon entering the fresher. She stepped into the shower and wrapped her arms around his waist.

He chuckled and turned around to face her.

"You'll never believe what Lea just told me," she said, as she walked around him and wet her hair under the shower head.

"What is it?" Anakin asked. She wrapped her arms around his neck.

"They have a little secret that they need our help keeping Ani," Padme replied.

"They as in Lea and..." he trailed off.

"Obi-Wan. They're in love Ani," Padme replied.

"Really?" Anakin asked in amazement.

"Yes, but they need our help hiding it Ani. The Jedi Council can't find out or they'll expel Obi-Wan," Padme replied.

"Well of course we'll help them, but I don't think they should have to hide their love," he replied.

"I know sweetie, I don't think they should have to either," Padme replied.

"I'm happy for them. Obi-Wan needs a good woman in his life, just like I need you," Anakin said, as he leaned down and kissed her lips. She moaned into the kiss, as his hands began to roam over her wet body.

"I need you too Ani," she said breathlessly...

Much later, while Padme was dressing for her meeting, Anakin and Obi-Wan finally got to speak.

"Anakin, I want to apologize to you. I haven't meant to be so cold to you lately. I was...afraid of what my feeling for Lea would mean and I pushed a friend away while I was at it," Obi-Wan said.

"You're forgiven already. I know it must have been scary for you to go against the code," Anakin replied.

"Yes, but more than worth it," Obi-Wan replied, with a smile. Anakin returned the smile.

"Yeah, love is definitely worth it," he replied.

"Master Qui-Gon spoke to me this morning," Obi-Wan mentioned. Anakin turned his head.

"I'm glad," he replied.

"He wants me to train you," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin blanched.

"Really?" he asked, in amazement.

"If you're willing. From what I've seen you do so far, I'd say you're ready for saber training. But we must be very discreet about this. No one must know, except Padme and Lea of course," Obi-Wan replied.

"I am willing and thank you Obi-Wan. This means so much to me," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan smiled and pat his shoulder.

"Well, we are almost family," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin beamed brightly.

"I guess we are," Anakin replied. The two men went back inside, knowing Padme would be ready to leave any minute.

Padme came out dressed in a dark purple senatorial gown. She was met by Anakin, whose arm she took, as he led her out the door. They were flanked by Lea, Obi-Wan, Captain Typho, and three of his security officers. She wondered if all the security was a little much, as she realized that Obi-Wan wasn't taking any chances. Ani had said earlier this morning that he was also worried about her safety and she just hoped nothing would go wrong...

A New Bounty

Disclaimer: I don't own SW. It all belongs to George.

AN: Here's chapter 17! Enjoy and let me know what you think!

Never Gone

Chapter 17: A New Bounty

Padme steeled herself against the angry stares from the loyalists in the large meeting room.

"Senator, I realize that you do not wish to support this war. But calling for me to release emergency powers at a time when the war has escalated hardly makes sense," Chancellor Palpatine said.

"I believe this war can still be solved diplomatically. I cannot see where taking power away from the Senate and liberties away from the people will help us win the war," Padme replied adamantly.

"Forgive me Senator Amidala, but I don't believe you have the experience necessary to make such a decision," Senator Turles glared at her.

"I'm afraid that I just cannot justify giving up my Emergency powers at this time Senator," Palpatine said.

"Chancellor, as representative of the delegation of 2000, I implore you to explore diplomatic solutions to the war," Padme insisted.

"And I am doing so Senator. But there is little room for diplomacy in a war zone my dear. Now, if you'll excuse me," Palpatine said, as he rose and exited the room. Padme rose and looped her arm in Anakin's, as they left.

"He didn't even listen to me. He had already decided to ignore my petition even before the meeting!" Padme ranted angrily, as they walked through the large Senate building. After fighting their way through the Holonet reporters, they were shuttled home in their speeder by Captain Typho.

Padme entered her apartment and went straight to her bedroom.

"I take it things didn't go well," Sola said.

"Not well at all," Anakin replied. Sola smiled.

"Well, I'll go talk to her. I might have something that could cheer her up," Sola said, as she took a data pad with her and went to see her little sister.

"Hey mom, can you help me with something?" Anakin asked.

"Of course darling, what is it?" Shmi asked.

"Well, I want to do something to make Padme feel better. They really treated her terribly mom. I was thinking maybe of having a romantic dinner on the veranda, but..." Anakin trailed off.

"Say no more sweetheart, Jobal and I will take care of everything," Shmi said. Jobal smiled and the two women went to work.

Padme heard a knock at her door. She had already changed out of her senatorial gown and into a flattering lavender dress that was light, airy and much more comfortable.

"Come in," Padme called.

"Hey little sister," Sola said. Padme smiled lightly.

"Hi Sola," she replied.

"I thought you could use something to cheer you up, so I brought the catalog from that bridal shop in Theed. I thought you might want to look at some dresses," Sola replied.

"That sounds wonderful. Anything to get my mind off the Senate," Padme replied. Padme sat down on the sofa with Sola and they began scrolling through the dresses.

"Some of these are so beautiful," Padme said.

"What exactly are you looking for?" Sola asked

"I'll know the perfect one when I see it," Padme replied. Padme flipped through the dresses and suddenly came onto the perfect one.

"This one. I want this one," Padme said.

"I'll contact the shop and tell them to hold that dress, because Senator Amidala will be coming to try it on in a few months," Sola said.

"Thanks Sola," Padme replied. Thinking about her wedding to Anakin had made her feel a lot better. She smiled and sat back with another data pad, going through more wedding details.

Tatooine

Well know bounty hunter, Aurra Sing entered the cantina she usually frequented and went up the bar.

"The usual," the bald human female said. The bartender nodded and poured her a shot of Corellian whiskey. She sat down and gulped the strong drink down.

"Here, this was sent here for you," the bartender said, as he handed her the datachip.

"You can use the holo recorder in the back room," the bartender said.

"Thanks, put the drink on my tab," she replied, as she went into the back room. She slipped the data chip in the recorder and switched it on. A hologram of a Neimodian came into view.

"Greetings Aurra Sing. I am Viceroy Nute Gunray of the Trade Federation. I have an interesting business proposition for you. With that, the image of a beautiful woman came into view, while Gunray's voice continued.

"This is Senator Padme Amidala of Naboo. She has been a thorn in my side for over ten years and I want her eliminated! The bounty for her death is one million credits. However, if you manage to capture her alive, I will pay you double if you turn her over to me, as I would very much like to witness her suffer before she is killed. Take care though, she is heavily guarded by her security, including a Jedi Knight,"

Aurra watched curiously, as the image of Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi came into view, which was followed by another image of a young, handsome man with shaggy blonde hair.

"This is Anakin Skywalker, the senator's soon to be husband. He is not to be underestimated, for he is responsible for the death of Jango Fett. If you're up for the challenge, contact me immediately for more details," Gunray said, as the transmission ended. Aurra Sing smirked greedily.

One million credits to kill a Senator...two million to capture her alive. She smirked again and pressed the reply button...

When Padme finally came out later in the evening, she found the living area dark and only lit with the light of many candles. She looked around at the vacant apartment.

"Anakin?" she called.

"Out here," she heard him call. She followed his voice out onto the veranda, which was also lit by soft candlelight.

"Ani, did you do this?" she asked in amazement, as she looked at the waiting dinner table.

"Well, our mom's helped me quite a bit," he replied shyly. She closed the distance between them and kissed him softly.

"Where is everyone?" she asked, as he pulled her chair out for her.

"Well, your mom mentioned going to see the holo opera. My mom has never seen one and got really excited, so Captain Typho escorted our mothers and your sister to tonight's showing," Anakin replied, as he scooted her in and then reached for the bottle of red wine. He poured it into their glasses and then sat down across from her.

"So we're all alone?" she asked.

"Yep, Obi-Wan and Lea are making themselves scarce, so it's just you and me angel," he replied. She smiled and clinked her glass to his, as they sipped together. Anakin dished up the food and they began to eat, talking and enjoying the company of each other.

Lea sat at her vanity table and brushed out her long hair. Obi-Wan came behind her and began massaging her shoulders.

"Oooh...that feels amazing Obi-Wan," Lea said.

"Well, then perhaps I can give you the full back massage," Obi-Wan replied.

"Now, that sounds like heaven," Lea replied, as she laid down on the bed on her stomach. Obi-Wan climbed on the bed and over legs,

before reaching around to undo the cord on her robe. He lowered it to her waist, leaving her back exposed to him. He began by needing his hands in a circular motion at the small of her back.

"Oooh, wow...your hands are amazing, my love," Lea moaned. Obi-Wan smirked and began working his hands higher. He continued his sensual massage until every knot in her back was gone...

They started out sitting across from each other, as they ate dinner. Then, when it came time for dessert, Padme had scooted her chair next to his. That idea was soon abandoned though, as she soon found herself sitting in Anakin's lap.

Padme giggled, as she fed the shurra fruit topped with whipped cream. She purposely smeared it all over his lips.

"You plan on cleaning that off milady?" he asked. She giggled.

"Of course Ani, that's all part of my fun," she replied, as she sensually moved her lips over his, while licking the cream off his lips. Padme broke the kiss and took a remote of some kind in her hand. She pressed a button and a soft, romantic tune filled the air around them. She stood up and took his hands.

"Will you dance with me Ani?" she asked. He smiled.

"Of course angel," he replied, as he stood up and swept her into his arms. She linked her arms around his neck, while his rested around her waist. Slowly, they swayed together, losing themselves in the depths of each other's eyes. Anakin smiled and twirled her around and then brought her back, so that her back was resting against him. He wrapped his arms around her waist and nuzzled her neck, while they continued to sway to the music. He twirled her again and swept her back into his arms, resting his hands firmly on her beautiful hips. Padme reached up and caressed his face with her hands and ran her fingers through his shaggy curls. Anakin tilted his head and brought his lips to hers in a soft kiss. Padme parted her lips, allowing

his tongue inside her mouth, deepening the kiss. Anakin's velvety tongue slid along her own, tasting her. She felt her knees go weak, as he plundered her mouth and she felt a taste of his unbridled passion for her that he was carefully restraining. He released her kiss swollen lips and his own traveled down her neck. She felt a warmth begin to spread through her core, as his hands began to roam over her body.

"Ani," she breathed, as he grasped her hips possessively. She hooked her arms around his neck, as he lifted her into his arms and carried her to their bedroom...

Much later...

Padme rested herself atop his chest, sated, with a satisfied smile on her face. She playfully traced the lines on his bare chest and he smiled, before kissing her forehead. The next few hours were spent lying in each others arms, just talking with occasional tender kisses and soft caresses. After those hours passed by, passion took them once again, before they finally fell asleep entwined so thoroughly with each other that it would have been impossible to tell where one began and the other ended...

The next day, Padme felt renewed after her passionate night with her soon to be husband. She was ready to fight for her petition's way for vote on the Senate floor. On the arm of her love and flanked by heavy security, Padme was escorted into the Senate building. Obi-Wan, Lea, and representative Binks sat in the pod next to Padme's where she stood making her speech. Anakin sat in her pod with her, refusing to leave her side, for which she was grateful. Her petition was not being well received and he could see the disdain on Chancellor Palpatine's face. He narrowed his eyes at the Chancellor. He didn't know what it was, but something just didn't feel right about the Chancellor. His eyes darted around to the different Senators who were spouting threatening things and denying Padme's words. Suddenly, something felt very wrong and his senses were tingling.

Obi-Wan was suddenly on his feet as well, trying to pinpoint the source of the uneasiness. But it was elusive and whoever it was, knew how to mask their presence in the Force. He was surprised that Anakin was even picking up on it. Suddenly, above them, Anakin and Obi-Wan spotted a bald, human female pulling out a concealed blaster. Obi-Wan pushed Lea and Jar Jar down in the pod.

"Stay down!" Obi-Wan called. Anakin pulled Padme down, just as a blaster bolt grazed past them. Screams and panic exploded through the Senate rotunda. Anakin drew his blaster and shot at the assassin. She dodged and shot at their pod, killing the hover engines. Padme screamed, and clung to Anakin, as their pod began to plummet toward the Senate floor. Lea screamed, as she watched them fall. Obi-Wan was hoping through the room from pod to pod to try and reach the assassin when he saw Anakin and Padme falling. Obi-Wan reached out with the Force to try and stop them, but they were falling fast. Anakin grappled at his belt for his extending cable. Padme clung to his waist, as he swung the cable up to hook onto the railing. He grasped the cable tightly with one hand, while the other arm wrapped around Padme's waist tightly. He swung them out of the pod and onto he held them tightly, as they were suspended in the air with only the cable holding them. Aurra Sing glared at them and smirked, as she saw Kenobi working way closer to her. Gunray had been right. This assignment was going to be harder than she thought, but she was willing to take on the challenge. She would collect the two million credits that the viceroy had placed on Amidala's head. She looked over her shoulder, seeing several Jedi enter, with sabers blazing. She smirked again. But it wouldn't be today. She fled the Senate building, masking herself with the dark side and disappeared right under the noses of the foolish Jedi chasing her...

Lea maneuvered her pod over to Anakin and Padme and they dropped into it. Padme still clung to Anakin, as she broke down sobbing in his arms.

"Shh...I've got you angel," he whispered to her. Lea docked their pod and they departed quickly. Obi-Wan and Captain Typho, along with his security flanked them. They helped Anakin and Padme shove a path through the swarming holonet reporters and into the speeder, which took off for Padme's apartment...

Return to Naboo

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here.

AN: Here's chapter 18! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 18: Return to Naboo

Jobal and Shmi sat in the living area, filling out invitations for their youngest children's wedding. Both women were enjoying themselves immensely, when they heard a commotion out on the veranda. They and Sola quickly got up to see what was going on.

"What in heaven's name is the matter?" Jobal asked, as Lea and Obi-Wan came rushing in, with Anakin and Padme behind them. Padme's security began darting around in different directions at Captain Typho's orders.

"There was another assassination attempt on Padme during the session," Lea informed her. Jobal looked as if she wanted to faint.

"No, not again. Oh Padme, when will you leave this life?" Jobal asked her daughter, who was still clinging to Anakin.

"Please mother...I can't talk about this right now," Padme replied, her voice shaking. Lea and Sola came to her and gently pried her from Anakin's arms.

"Let us help you out of this dress and get you relaxed," Sola said.

"Are you sure you'll be okay?" Anakin asked. She smiled slightly at him and nodded.

"I'll be okay Ani," she replied. But her eyes told him not to go far, for she needed him badly right now. He nodded and watched her go.

"Tell me the truth master Kenobi, how close was it this time?" Jobal asked. Obi-Wan sighed.

"If Anakin hadn't been in the pod with her, I don't know if she would have made it," Obi-Wan replied honestly.

"The assassin killed the hover engine in her pod and it was dropping fast. I was able to slow it down using the Force, but it was falling fast. Anakin used a grappling cable to hook onto the railing and swung them out of the pod," Obi-Wan told her. Jobal buried her face in her hands.

"Oh I do wish Anakin would try to talk her into retiring from this life," Jobal fretted.

"I'm afraid that it might not matter whether or not Padme stays in the Senate or not Mrs. Naberrie. I have a gut feeling that the bounty hunter was probably hired by Nute Gunray. He doesn't seem to care where she is, he only wants revenge on her for what happened ten years ago. I must go brief the council on what has happened," Obi-Wan said, as he excused himself and left in a speeder for the Temple.

Shmi touched her son's shoulder, as he stared out at the Coruscant skyline.

"I don't know what I'd do if I lost her mom," Anakin said, tears pooling in his eyes. Shmi took her only son in her arms and hugged him tightly.

"You won't lose her Ani. You're holding onto her far too tightly for that to happen," Shmi assured him.

"Terrible this is. A great advocate for us in the Senate, Senator Amidala is," Yoda said.

"Obi-Wan, are you certain that the bounty hunter was Aurra Sing?" Mace asked.

"Yes master, I'm positive. She masked herself well also. I believe that she has obviously been hired by Nute Gunray," Obi-Wan replied.

"It is curious that Anakin was able to sense her at all. Don't you find this a bit peculiar?" Ki-Adi Mundi asked.

"At first I did master, but the Force is extremely strong with Anakin, even though he is untrained. His senses were also acutely tuned to Padme, so it does not surprise me that he picked up on the danger directed at her," Obi-Wan replied.

"The Senator's safety must be taken into account. Visit with the Chancellor, master Windu and I will. May have to send her back into hiding, until caught the assassin can be," Yoda said. Obi-Wan nodded and proceeded to return to the Senator's apartment.

"Is she okay?" Anakin asked, as Sola and Lea came out.

"She's starting to calm down, but she's asking for you," Sola told him gently. Anakin went to their bedroom and let himself in. He saw her sitting on the padded window ledge where he usually saw her curled up reading a book. But now, she was curled up there, hugging a pillow and staring out the window. Lea and Sola had helped her out of the heavy senatorial gown and into a lighter royal blue dress which was sleeveless with a lower neck line. It looked much more comfortable then the gowns she had to wear to the Senate and he had to admit that he preferred her in the simple dress rather than the elaborate Senate costumes. He sat down beside her and she climbed into his lap, holding onto him, as if she were afraid he would disappear. She rested her head on his chest and he kissed her forehead.

"I'm frightened Anakin," she whispered.

"I'm not going to let anything happen to you angel. They'll have to go through me first," he told her. She looked up into his eyes.

"All I've ever tried to do was serve my people Ani. Why do they want me dead?" she asked, tears threatening to fall from her brown eyes.

"And you do a wonderful job Padme. Your people couldn't ask for better representation. As for Gunray, he still seems to hold a grudge against you for what happened ten years ago. But we'll stop him angel and make sure that he is put in prison where he belongs this time," Anakin told her, trying to comfort her, as he held her tightly in his arms. He leaned down and kissed her deeply, letting her know that he no intention of leaving her side.

"I love you Ani," she said, as she snuggled deeper in his arms.

"I love you too angel," he replied, as he stroked his fingers through her long curls.

As predicted, Chancellor Palpatine suggested that Padme be moved into hiding on Naboo again. He set up a meeting with the Senator to discuss it with her the following morning.

Dorme finished zipping Padme's gown up and Padme thanked her. She was dreading this meeting. She knew that the Chancellor would give her an executive order to leave Coruscant until the assassin was captured. She joined hands with Anakin, as they were informed that the Chancellor was waiting for them in the sitting area. Upon her entrance, the Chancellor and his guest stood up to greet her.

"It warms my heart indeed to see that you unharmed after that awful ordeal yesterday," Palpatine said.

"Thank you Chancellor," Padme replied.

"And you Anakin. It seems that we owe the Senator's well being to you again. Your rescue was gallant and it was so fortunate that you

were with her," Palpatine said.

"I'll never be anywhere else," Anakin replied.

"Forgive me, allow me to introduce my colleague. You've met him before when you were queen milady. This is captain Willhuff Tarkin, a very old friend of mine," Palpatine introduced. Tarkin raised Padme's hand to his lips and kissed it.

"It's is wonderful to see you again milady. We on Naboo are all relieved to see that the assassin was unsuccessful in her attempt," Tarkin said.

"Thank you captain," Padme replied.

"And you Skywalker. They're calling you a hero. It is good to finally meet the lucky man who has won our Amidala's heart. You are a verylucky man," Tarkin said, as he shook Anakin's hand. Anakin had been studying this man for the past few minutes and already didn't like him. He gave off the same vibes Anakin was always picking up from Palpatine and the Force was assuring him to keep Padme far away from this man. Anakin smiled and nodded.

"Nice to meet you too. And yes, I am very lucky, thank you," Anakin replied, taking Padme's hand in his own. Anakin's icy stare, however, did not match the warm words coming from his mouth. Tarkin received the silent message, telling him that he would be watching him, especially if it concerned Padme. The four of them sat down, so the Chancellor could discuss the situation with them.

"Padme, I know that it will deeply troubling to you to leave the Senate again. But we must think of your safety first. It just is not safe on Coruscant for you with such a large bounty on your head," Palpatine said.

"I suppose I have no choice then. You're giving me an executive order to leave?" Padme asked.

"I'm afraid it is in your best interest my dear. That is why I have brought Captain Tarkin along. His knowledge of politics is only second to mine. I will be placing him in the Senate to fill your position until that awful assassin is caught. He will communicate with you over the holocom on a daily basis to keep you up to speed with all the Senate dealings. You two will discuss motions and issues that need to be addressed and so forth," Palpatine explained. Padme fumed.

"Chancellor, no offense to Captain Tarkin, but I thought I would be allowed to choose who would stand in for me," Padme said.

"Oh, you've had so much to worry about milady. I simply believe that Captain Tarkin will serve Naboo the best in your absence," Palpatine replied. Padme fought down the urge to scream.

"Very well Chancellor. Captain Tarkin, I look forward to working with you," Padme replied politely, as the stood. Anakin and Padme saw them out. Padme let out a frustrated sigh and Anakin placed his hands on her shoulders.

"Tell me this isn't happening Ani," Padme said, nearly crying.

"I don't like him either angel. I got a really strange feeling from him," Anakin replied.

"That's because he's one of Palpatine's closest friends. Originally, Tarkin was from Eriadu. He and Palpatine met many years ago during Palpatine's time as Senator. Tarkin came to Naboo shortly after that and decided to stay, applying for citizenship shortly after. He and Palpatine share the same ideals. He'll support Palpatine one-hundred percent," Padme fretted.

"But you're still the Senator of Naboo. All decisions he makes have to be approved by you," Anakin replied, trying to comfort her. She nodded and laid her head against his shoulder.

The next morning, Obi-Wan and Lea were seeing Anakin and Padme off at her apartment. Chancellor Palpatine had made arrangements for them to travel on a vacationing yacht as a young husband and wife under an assumed name. The yacht would be making several stops, before reaching Naboo in three days. Once in Theed, they would be taking a Gungan sub through the core of the planet into an even deeper into the lake country this time to the lake palace of Ceres, which was Queen Jamilla's personal resort that she rarely used. It was even deeper and more secluded than Varykino. Lea, Shmi, Sola, and Jobal would be returning to Naboo aboard Padme's ship and Obi-Wan would be accompanying them in his star fighter. They would arrived at Ceres before Anakin and Padme.

"Well, we'll see you both in a few days. Be safe," Lea said, as she hugged them both.

"Well, Mr. And Mrs. Starkiller, we'll be seeing you both soon. Be mindful of the Force, Anakin," Obi-Wan told him.

"Starkiller?" Anakin laughed.

"What's wrong with it?" Obi-Wan frowned.

"Nothing Obi-Wan, it just sounds funny," Anakin replied.

"Well, I had to come up with something off the top of my head and that's what I came up with," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin and Padme waved goodbye, as they stepped into the air taxi and it took off.

Anakin and Padme boarded the luxurious yacht and it departed from Coruscant. They settled in the modest quarters assigned to them and curled up together on the sofa.

"You okay angel?" Anakin asked.

"I guess. I'm just worried Ani. I don't trust Palpatine and I don't trust Tarkin," Padme replied.

"I know, I don't either. But everything will work out. And who knows, Master Windu is looking into the capture of the assassin personally, so she could be caught any day now," Anakin replied. Padme nodded, as Anakin's hands moved up to massage her shoulders. She moaned, as he kissed her neck.

"How do you do it?" she asked.

"Do what angel?" he asked, still nuzzling her neck.

"Make me forget everything else, but this," she replied, as she kissed him passionately.

"Because this," he paused to kiss her lips again.

"This, meaning us, is the best thing that's ever happened to me," he replied. She smiled and kissed him again.

"Me too Ani," she replied, as they cuddled together.

Three days later, Anakin and Padme arrived in Theed. As they departed the yacht, Anakin opened his senses to the Force, sensing for danger. They arrived at the marina, where captain Typho awaited them. They boarded the sub and Typho piloted them through the core. Several hours later, the sub surfaced in the deepest parts of the Naboo lake country. The beauty and nature was even more lush and vibrant than that of Varykino. Anakin marveled at the sights, as he had done in Varykino. He knew that his mother was probably enjoying this new scenery immensely as well. They could see a large lake house in the distance and they knew that was there destination. They saw their family waiting for them on the dock. They smiled at each other and joined hands, both eager to see them...

"Senator Amidala has arrived safely on Naboo," Tarkin reported.

"Good, Gunray's assassin has come in handy. With her absence in the Senate, things will go much more smoothly," Palpatine said.

"But I thought I was to appear to uphold her views?" Tarkin questioned.

"You will for the time being. The time has not come yet, but it will. When it does, you will turn Naboo's support to me," Palpatine replied Tarkin nodded, as he stood next to Palpatine, looking out at the Coruscant skyline...

An Angel's Wings

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here.

AN: Here's chapter 19! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 19: An Angel's Wings

The last six months in seclusion had passed quickly. Anakin's days were spent in training with Obi-Wan mostly in the meadow and by the lake. The Force was extremely strong on Naboo and it seemed to enhance Anakin's abilities. It had proved to be an ideal place to train, as the Force was so easy to feel here. Over the last six months, Obi-Wan found himself questioning the ways of the Jedi. He had journeyed back and forth between Coruscant and Naboo a few times in the past months to meet with the council. The first time he arrived back on Coruscant was after three months on Naboo. It was a big shock to his system to feel how stagnant the Force felt on Coruscant as compared to Naboo. He realized that it was no wonder why they couldn't sense the Sith Lord, when he was able to cloak himself easily on a dead world like Coruscant. Obi-Wan had been lucky to have an extra crystal for Anakin to use. Anakin built his light saber under Obi-Wan's guidance and then his saber training began. He had progressed at an amazing, almost alarming rate and Obi-Wan was still stunned at how easily Anakin learned the ways of the Force.

Padme's days were spent in daily meetings with acting Senator Tarkin over the holocom and the rest of the time, she planned her wedding. It was now fast approaching and today was her final fitting for her dress. Captain Typho and Dorme had made the journey to Theed to pick up Padme's dress and she was now trying it on.

Padme stood still, as her mother zipped the dress up and then stood back, while Padme observed herself in the mirror.

"Oh Padme, you look beautiful," Jobal gushed. Shmi was in awe as well.

"Jobal is right Padme, I believe you are going to be the most beautiful bride in the galaxy," Shmi said.

"Anakin is going to faint," Sola giggled. Lea giggled with her, as Padme twirled in the mirror, a bright smile on her face. Even though the situation in the Senate continued to deteriorate, it had been a wonderful six months for their families. Jobal and Shmi hit it off so well, that it was like they had been friends for years. After months of talking it out, Shmi convinced Cliegg that they could take up farming on Naboo. Jobal, Shmi, Ruwee, and Sola had all taken a trip to Tatooine about three months ago to discuss things with Cliegg and Owen. Ruwee was committed to helping Cliegg and had acquired a stake of land about a mile from the Naberrie home. Ruwee and Cliegg got along well and after crunching some figures for Cliegg, Ruwee convinced him that farming on Naboo would be more profitable. So, a month later, Cliegg, Shmi, Owen and Beru left Tatooine for good. Darred, being an architect, designed a nice modest home. And now, Cliegg, Owen, Beru, Ruwee, and Darred worked to help them build it. Despite the happy times for their family, the threat on Padme's life was still very real and very constant. They had heard reports that Aurra Sing had been lurking around Naboo, but thanks to security, she was spotted and quickly fled Naboo for fear of capture. She eagerly watched for a security breach or just the right opportunity. She was hoping that all the attention that the Senator's wedding was drawing would reveal that opening, but due to the Chancellor's attendance, security was triple the normal on and around Naboo.

"Oh Padme, I think that dress was made for you," Lea said. The dress had a straight collar which rested just above her bosom. The bodice hugged her curves perfectly in all the right places and very thin silver spaghetti straps adorned her shoulders. The skirt was long

and full, but not overly full. The dress zipped up the back, just below her shoulder blades. Padme sighed dreamily, as she stared at the dress she would be married in just a week from today. Slowly, Jobal and Shmi began helping her out of it and back into a dark green Senatorial gown for her daily meeting with acting Senator Tarkin.

"Good afternoon Senator," Tarkin greeted.

"Good afternoon acting Senator Tarkin," Padme greeted formally.

"What of the bills I proposed?" Padme asked.

"I'm sorry Senator, but I'm afraid that it did not even make it to the floor," Tarkin said regretfully.

"Why not?" Padme asked.

"I'm sorry milady, but the Chancellor has spoken to me and with the war, he thinks the Senate can simply not be bothered with this right now. There will be a more appropriate time for this down the road," Tarkin said.

"A more appropriate time? Since when is helping end slavery in the outer rim and funding to help refugees on war torn worlds not appropriate!" Padme ranted.

"I know that these two bills were very close to your heart Senator. But we are at war and there are just more pressing matters right now. The Republic's funding is being stretched to the limit as it is," Tarkin replied.

"The Republic is pouring all it's money into this war and as a result, its people are suffering! We cannot let this war destroy the principles on which the Republic was founded!" Padme argued. Tarkin smiled sympathetically at her.

"You know I agree with you Senator, but I'm afraid Chancellor Palpatine's decision on this is final. He will not allow these bills to the

floor at this time. Fighting in the outer rim has intensified and the Chancellor has adjourned the Senate for three weeks at which time we will begin reviewing the budgeting of the war," Tarkin informed her. Padme clenched her jaw, but swallowed the haughty response she wanted to retort. He did not agree with her. She knew he would always be one of Palpatine's strongest supporters. But she smiled politely instead.

"Thank you for all you've done Tarkin," she replied.

"You are very welcome milady. I suppose I shall see you in about a week. Chancellor Palpatine thought it would be a nice reprieve for me to return home for a few days, therefore I shall be accompanying him to your wedding. I look forward to the blessed event," Tarkin replied. Padme again forced a smile.

"Thank you, both Anakin and I will look forward to seeing you both. Good day, acting Senator Tarkin," Padme replied, as the transmission blinked out. In the next room, Lea, Sola, and Jobal could hear Padme's yell of frustration.

"That sounds like it didn't go very well," Sola said.

"I'll go see what I can do," Lea said, as she got up and went to find Padme. Currently, Shmi was at the small market of the nearby mountain town the lake house resided near. And she had dragged her son with her.

Anakin stood around the marketplace, bored to tears, while his mother went about picking up the things she needed. He walked around the shop they were in aimlessly, when something behind a glass case caught his eye. The minute he saw it, he knew that it had been made for Padme. It was a silver pendant in the shape of angel's wings on a long silver chain. Tiny sapphires adorned the tips of the angel's wings, three on each side. Money was never something Anakin Skywalker had much of. As a slave, he had nothing. All the money ever made by him in Watto's shop was kept

by his old master. Then, on the Moisture farm, money was very tight and there was never much left over. But Anakin quickly learned that his ability to fix things, particularly ships and speeders was valued highly in his time on Coruscant and Naboo. Bail Organa was probably Anakin's favorite out of all Padme's Senator friends, but the man proved to be mechanically inept. Anakin had helped him fix his speeder shortly after he first arrived there with Padme. Bail had been so impressed by his abilities that he found other things for Anakin to fix. He was so happy to find a worthwhile, honest mechanic that he not only paid Anakin handsomely for his work, but told all his friends too. They had kept Anakin busy during the day while Padme was dealing with her Senatorial duties. While Anakin had insisted that Bail did not have to pay him, he insisted and Anakin had stashed quite a savings in a short time. He beamed when he realized he had enough to buy it and quickly purchased the necklace.

As Anakin and Shmi left the shop, Anakin showed his mother what he had found for Padme.

"Isn't it perfect mom?" he said, obviously very pleased with his finding.

"It is sweetheart. She's going to absolutely love it," Shmi said, as they headed toward the speeder. Anakin loaded his mother's bags into the back of the speeder, before he hopped in and sped off toward their residence.

Anakin arrived home and went looking for Padme. He entered their bedroom and saw clothes strewn all over the place. Normally, Padme was very neat and tidy, except for when she was depressed and angry. He picked up an empty candy box, which had once contained Padme's favorite brand of chocolate covered shuura.

"Something tells me that the meeting with Tarkin didn't go very well," Anakin said. He heard the faint sound of water in the bathroom and realized that his angel was probably curled up in a bubble bath about

now. He smiled, as he held the small box in his hand. Time to go cheer up his beautiful wife to be.

Obi-Wan searched around for Lea. He had seen her eye him after dinner and then slink off. He had suspicions that she was somewhere waiting on him. For fear of being seen entering her room by anyone other than Anakin and Padme, Obi-Wan decided to go outside and around the house to her veranda. Using the Force, he lifted himself onto her veranda and sure enough found the door unlocked.

"I was beginning to wonder if you were coming," Lea teased, as she turned from her dressing table.

"Of course I was coming. You just snuck off so suddenly after dinner that I wasn't sure where you went," he said, with a smile.

"Well, here I am Jedi," Lea said, with a feral grin. Obi-Wan felt that familiar heat spread to his core. It had been a week and he had just returned this morning from Coruscant. He had attended a few Council meetings concerning the war and also the capture of Senator Amidala's assassin, which they had not been able to do yet. Just a week without her had nearly killed him and he wondered when she had developed such a hold over him.

"It's been a week Obi-Wan, why aren't you kissing me yet?" she asked. He snapped out of his daze and quickly closed the distance between them. Obi-Wan's lips descended on hers in a searing kiss, while their hands traveled all over each other. Lea tugged at his tunic and broke the kiss long enough to lift it over his head. She tackled his lips again and Obi-Wan found himself surprised by her aggressiveness. Together, they let the bed catch their fall...

Padme soaked in her warm bath water, trying to relieve some of the stress. She smiled, as she heard the door slide open, knowing it was Anakin.

"Hi baby," she said softly, as knelt beside the tub.

"Hi, I take it the meeting didn't go very well?" he asked. She nodded.

"No, but everything's better now," she replied, as she leaned up and brushed her lips against his.

"Tell you what, why don't I help you out of here. Then, you can tell me everything that happened. It'll make you feel better," Anakin said. She smiled and nodded, as he grabbed a fluffy towel. He helped her dry off and then wrapped her in her soft, blue robe. He led her out into their bedroom. She sat on the sofa, while he undressed and put his sleep pants on. He joined her on the sofa and pulled her into his arms, where she cuddled close, resting her on his chest. She was silent for a moment, before finally speaking.

"My proposals didn't even make it to the floor Ani. Chancellor Palpatine refused to even let them see the light of day. Apparently, the war takes precedence over the well being of the people," Padme said.

"You tried angel. That's more than anyone else is doing," he replied.

"I went into public service to help people Anakin. But the Republic is falling apart. This war represents a failure to listen. Nothing I've done lately has done any good, because no wants to listen," Padme replied.

"That's not true angel, you know that. Do you know how touched my mother and I were when you presented that bill to propose an end to slavery in the outer rim? We were speechless Padme. Neither of us expected it to go very far, but just the fact that you tried means more to us than you'll ever know," Anakin told her.

"But I wanted to do more than that Anakin. Slavery shouldn't exist! And all those refugees on those war torn planets need help and the Chancellor turns a deaf ear to their suffering!" Padme said, as a few

tears escaped down her cheeks. Anakin brushed them away with her thumbs. He raised her chin and brought her eyes to his.

"The people of this galaxy couldn't have better representation. You're such an amazing woman Padme, I can't help but be in awe of you sometimes. I ask the Force what I did to deserve you, because there are times that I realize how out my league you are," Anakin confessed.

"That's not true at all Anakin. We were made for each other baby," she told him, as she brushed her fingers through his shaggy curls.

"You think?" he asked. She smiled and kissed him tenderly.

"I know we were. Don't you ever think you're not good enough for me or let anyone tell you that you aren't. You're everything to me and you're all I'll ever want or need," she replied.

"I love you," he said.

"I love you too Ani, so much," she replied, as she held his face in her hands.

"I have something for you angel," he said, with a shy smile. She smiled back.

"What is it my love?" she asked. He placed the small box in her hand and Padme's eyes widened.

"I hope you like it. When I saw it, I couldn't help but think it was made for you," Anakin told her.

"Oh Ani," she said, in surprise, as she carefully opened the hinged case. She gasped, as she laid eyes on the pendant.

"Oh Anakin, it's beautiful. I love it Ani," she said, as she planted kisses all over his face.

"I'm glad angel," he said, as she pushed her hair aside, allowing him to put it around her neck. She leaned her back against him and turned her head to his.

"Oh, it's beautiful Ani," she repeated, as she kissed him. He angled his head, drawing her lips into a passionate kiss. She surrendered herself into Anakin's strong embrace, as his lips moved over hers in a passionate dance...

The next week passed by furiously, as the final plans for the wedding were executed. Security on Naboo was tripled in light of the Chancellor's imminent arrival for the Senator's wedding. Aurra Sing cursed, as she absolutely no way to bypass so much security. Nute Gunray was growing impatient, but she assured the viceroy that the Senator would not stay on Naboo forever. The lure of the problems in the Senate would draw her out soon, despite the dangers to her life. And then, Aurra Sing would have her and finally collect the bounty...

In the next chapter...the wedding... :)

The Wedding

Disclaimer: I don't own anything. It all belongs to George!

AN: Here's chapter 20! Thanks for all the wonderful reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 20: The Wedding

Surrounded by heavy security, Anakin, Padme, and their families arrived at Varykino very early the morning of the wedding. The wedding decorations were already being set up. Anakin and Padme would be married in the garden overlooking the lake. A large, white archway was being set up as the alter. Silver and royal blue Nabooan roses, which were the colors Padme had chosen for her wedding, adorned the alter and most of the decorations. Upon arrival, Anakin and Padme were separated to begin preparing them and their wedding party. Anakin was strictly instructed that he was not for any reason to venture into the women's half of the house.

After Padme showered, Shmi and Jobal began helping Padme with her hair. While they were doing that Sola was helping Ryoo and Pooja into their flower girl dresses. Ryoo would be doing most of the petal throwing and little Pooja would be carrying the rings. After Ryoo and Pooja were ready, Lea, Beru and Sola helped each other into their maid of honor and bridesmaid dresses.

"This is such a lovely color of blue," Beru said, as she stared at the deep royal blue shimmersilk dress in the mirror. Each dress was identical with off the shoulder sleeves and a hart shaped collar above the bosom. The skirt was long and full, but not overly full or bulky.

"Yes, it is a beautiful color. Padme told me she chose it, because it reminded her of Anakin's eyes," Lea said. There was a collective

awww from Sola and Beru, followed by a few giggles. Padme's hair was tumbled down her back in loose ringlets. The sides were brought to the back and fastened at the back of her head with a beautiful clip, decorated with roses. After her hair and a light amount of make-up was applied, Jobal and Shmi helped Padme into her dress. Shmi fastened the sheer veil in hair with pins and then brought it over Padme's face. Her mother completed the process by handing Padme her bouquet of silver and blue roses.

"Oh Padme, you look absolutely radiant," Jobal said. Padme beamed. It was really happening. She was really marrying the most wonderful, gorgeous man in the galaxy.

"Thanks mom," Padme replied. They heard a soft knock at the door and Ruwee stepped in.

"Are we just about ready?" he asked.

"We are dear," Jobal replied. Ruwee stood in awe of his youngest daughter.

"You look beautiful Padme," he told her.

"Thank you daddy," she replied, as she took his arm and he led her to their positions.

Anakin stood at the alter next to the holy man, more nervous than he'd ever been. Though, he usually hated tuxes, he had to admit that the tux Padme had picked for him looked good. It was all black with royal blue trimmings. He scanned the guests briefly. Some he knew, some he didn't. They had kept the guest list down to about fifty people, which was small, considering how many people Padme knew. In the front row, Cliegg gave him a reassuring smile and he smiled back. Anakin recognized Padme's good friends, Bail Organa and Mon Mothma. There were a few other Senators there too, but he couldn't put names with their faces. His eyes drifted to Queen Jamilla herself. She was seated next to Chancellor Palpatine. Anakin

knew that he should be honored that the Chancellor of the Republic was attending his and Padme's wedding, but for some reason the presence of the Chancellor and Tarkin for that matter only unnerved him. He took a deep breath and used a calming technique that Obi-Wan had taught him. Thankfully, due to all the security, they had managed to keep the holonet reporters back in Theed. He was also kind of glad that Master Yoda and Master Windu had to decline their invitation due to matters concerning the war. He was worried that they would be able to sense that Obi-Wan had been training him. Or worse, they would notice the connection between he and Lea. Anakin tried to calm his rambling thoughts again, as his mother and Jobal were escorted to their seats by. Soft music began to play, as Owen and Beru slowly walked down the aisle arm in arm. They both gave him smiles, as they flanked off to their positions. Sola and Darred were next and each took their positions. Finally, the best man and maid of honor were next. Obi-Wan wore his most formal Jedi robes, black in color, to match the other tuxes. Lea looked stunning in her maid of honor dress also. Each took their positions, as Ryoo and Pooja walked down the aisle, sprinkling rose petals. The music intensified and Padme entered on her father's arm. At that moment, everyone around her disappeared from Anakin's gaze. She encompassed his attention completely and stunned him to speechlessness. She reached the alter and her father released her arm. She joined hands with Anakin, and they both smiled, as they gazed into each other's eyes.

"You are the most beautiful thing I've ever seen," Anakin whispered, in awe of her. Padme blushed under his intense gaze.

"Thank you Ani," she whispered back.

"We are gathered here today to join Anakin Skywalker and Padme Amidala in the sacred bonds of marriage," the holy man began.

"Who gives this women to wed to this man?" the holy man asked. Ruwee and Jobal stood.

"We do," Ruwee said, with a soft smile on his face.

"What we join together today, let no one come between. You both have chosen to recite your own vows," the holy man said, indicating they could begin. Padme handed her bouquet to Lea, as Anakin took both of her small hands in his own, before he began.

"Padme, I've loved from the moment I first laid eyes on you, almost eleven years ago, when I just a boy. I knew that you had to be an angel and you are. Since then, I've dreamed of making you my wife and it's finally happening. I will love you and cherish you for the rest of my life and beyond Padme, because you are my universe. I will spend the rest of my life making you happy, taking care of you, and protecting you. I love you Padme and I give myself to you," Anakin finished, as he slid the golden wedding band on her finger. Tears had long ago welled in Padme's eyes during his speech and she reached under her veil to wipe them away.

"Anakin, before you came back into my life, I was living an incomplete, empty life. Even if I didn't realize it at the time. I don't remember what life was like without you and I never want to remember. You've made my life complete and today, I'm finally making you my husband. I will love and cherish you for the rest of my life and beyond Anakin, because you are my universe too. I love you Anakin, so very much, and I give myself to you," Padme finished, as she slid the golden wedding band on his finger.

"A love like this cannot be broken by any Force. By the power vested in me by our benevolent queen, I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss your bride," the holy man told Anakin. He inched closer to Padme and lifted her veil. He tilted his head and she leaned in, as their lips met in a passionate kiss, sealing their union.

Anakin and Padme danced slowly, entwined in each other's arms. It was their first dance as husband and wife.

"I love you so much Padme. I'm so happy," Anakin said. Padme reached up and fondly brushed his bangs out of his eyes.

"I am too Ani and I love you too," she replied, as she rested her head against his chest, as they swayed slowly to the music.

Lea sighed.

"They look so happy," she said dreamily.

"Well, why don't we stop standing here and go out there and dance ourselves?" Obi-Wan said, holding his hand out for her.

"Can we? They're aren't any Jedi here...but" she was cut off by Obi-Wan.

"Milady, I do believe that it is traditional for the maid of honor to share a dance with the best man," Obi-Wan replied. Lea smiled and took his hand.

"I believe you are correct master Jedi. Kindly lead the way," she replied, as she took his hand. The rest of the wedding party joined in the second dance as well. It wasn't long before most of the other guests were dancing and enjoying themselves as well.

Chancellor Palpatine sipped carefully at the fine Nabooan wine in his hand. The Force around him was permeated with so much love it was nauseating. He studied Skywalker for a moment, trying to survey his connection to the Force. It was an incredibly strong connection...and it had grown stronger, much stronger than it had six months ago. His eyes drifted to Kenobi and he had to suppress a cruel snarl. Had Kenobi really been training the boy? If he had, Palpatine would have normally been thrilled. Anakin was extremely gifted, but the Chancellor knew that there would be no way to successfully turn him, even if Aurra Sing managed to do her job and kill the Senator. He had sensed the boy was already suspicious of him and for that reason, Palpatine needed him to be eliminated. If Aurra Sing failed to do it...then he might have to send Dooku after the boy and his wife. Plastering a fake smile on his face, he approached the couple to offer his congratulations.

"The night is wearing late my young friends, so my security will be seeing me back to the palace. I just wanted to offer my congratulations to you both," Palpatine said.

"Thank you Chancellor," Padme replied gratefully.

"We have missed your presence in the Senate milady. I do hope you will be able to return soon," Palpatine said.

"Me too, your excellency," she replied.

"And congratulations to you Anakin. You are a very lucky man," Palpatine said.

"Yes I am, thank you your excellency," Anakin replied, as he shook the man's hand. He didn't like this man at all. Something about the way he looked at both he and Padme. To anyone else, it seemed kind, but Anakin always got the feeling that his gaze for them held carefully hidden malice. Anakin shook those thoughts away and smiled gratefully at the Chancellor, as he and Padme bid him good night. And so, the painstaking task of standing at the exit to receive well wishes and bid goodbye to their guests began. Two hours later, the last of the guests were gone. Sola and Darred loaded their sleeping daughters into the speeder, before saying goodbye and heading home. Padme's parents and Anakin's families were next to leave and now all they were all that remained, besides Obi-Wan, Lea, and the heavy, but discreet security. Obi-Wan and Lea had already left them alone. Padme wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him passionately for a long moment.

"Let's go change into something more comfortable and then I thought we could have some of that wine on the veranda, Mr. Skywalker," Padme said, with a smile. Anakin smiled back.

"That sounds perfect Mrs. Skywalker," he replied, as she led him to their bedroom. They walked in and through the sitting room to the bedroom, where Padme immediately occupied the fresher. Anakin went about taking off the tux and slipped on a pair of his black sleep

pants. He slipped on the matching top, but left it unbuttoned down the front. He waited out on the veranda for Padme and filled two glasses with the fine red wine. Soon, he heard soft footsteps behind him and turned to his bride. His jaw dropped, as she walked toward him, swaying her hips. She was dressed in a slinky, red silk night that barely reached mid thigh in length. The rest of it hugged her curves and barely concealed her chest. Anakin accidentally dropped the wine bottle he was holding. He cursed in Huttesse, as he quickly picked up the bottle and placed it back on the table. Padme put her hand over her mouth to stifle a chuckle. When Sola had given her this at her bridal shower a few days earlier, Padme had blushed ten shades of red. But as Sola predicted, it was having the desired effect. She moved closer to him and snaked her arms around his neck.

"I take it you approve of my attire, my darling husband," Padme said.

"Yeah," he replied, with that crooked grin she loved. They picked up their glasses and clinked them together, before sipping. They set their glasses down, as Anakin's lips descended on hers. Padme eagerly wrapped her arms around his neck, as he let his passion for her take over the kiss. Padme felt her knees go weak, as his mouth moved over hers and his tongue danced with her own. Suddenly, she felt a strange sensation and pulled away from his lips. She gasped and clung to him, as she discovered they were hovering off the ground.

"Ani, what are you doing?" she asked. He chuckled.

"Floating. It's how I feel when I'm with you," he replied, as he kissed her neck. Padme's eyes drooped shut, as his lips moved along her neck with gentle kisses and soft nips of affection. Padme held onto him tightly, as they continued to float.

"I'd never let you fall angel," Anakin whispered, as he pulled her lips into another kiss. Padme melted in his arms, letting him hold her up completely. He lowered them back to the ground slowly.

"I'd like to take you higher, but I think I'll save it for another night. There's something else I want to do right now," he told her. She stared into his dreamy blue eyes.

"And what would that be?" she asked.

"I want to make love to you," he said, as his hands drifted over her shoulders and down to her hips. Padme linked her arms around his neck, as he lifted her into his arms. Padme held his face in her hands, as he carried her to their bed.

"I want that too Ani," she said softly, before his lips came crashing down on hers in a searing kiss...

In chapter 21, things turn serious as Aurra Sing plots to eliminate the Senator and her husband...

The Trap

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here.

AN: Here's chapter 21! Thanks for all the great reviews! Enjoy and let me know what you think.

Never Gone

Chapter 21: The Trap

"Where are you taking me?" Anakin asked, as Padme led him through the streets of Theed. She had ordered him to keep his eyes shut until she told him it was okay to open them. Obi-Wan and Lea smiled, as they followed behind the young couple.

"You'll see, we're almost there," his beautiful wife answered. They arrived at the correct docking bay at the palace and Padme led him to the spot.

"Okay Ani, you can open your eyes now," Padme told him. Anakin did and before them sat a brand new, beautiful Nubian cruiser that was considerably larger than their other one.

"Wow...this is ours?" Anakin asked in disbelief.

"This is our wedding present from the queen. I remember mentioning to her a while back that you had a love for flying and ships. So, when she told me about this, I wanted it to be a surprise for you," Padme replied.

"It's incredible. When do I get to fly it?" Anakin asked eagerly. Padme giggled and looked back at Obi-Wan.

"Well, I was hoping that master Kenobi would allow us to take her out on short cruise today," Padme said, looking expectantly at Obi-Wan.

"By yourselves?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Come on Obi-Wan, it is our honeymoon," Anakin pleaded, as he wrapped his arms around Padme's waist. Obi-Wan sighed and then pointed his finger at them.

"Just for the day. Be back by sundown," Obi-Wan told them. Anakin did a mock salute.

"Yes sir!" he replied.

"Artoo, start giving the ship a look over and get it ready," Anakin told their faithful little astro droid. Artoo whirled in excitement, as he set off to begin his check. Anakin scooped Padme up in his arms and began carrying her toward the ramp.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Carrying you on the ship for our maiden voyage, milady," he replied, in his best formal voice. Padme giggled, as he carried her up the ramp.

"If the Council finds out that I'm letting them go alone, I'll be in for it," Obi-Wan said.

"They'll be fine. What the Council doesn't know, won't hurt them. Besides, we can stay around Theed today, so we're not far. There's many sites to see and I bet in all your time on Naboo, you've never gotten to enjoy any of them," Lea guessed.

"You would be correct milady," Obi-Wan replied. Lea rolled her eyes. She hated when he called her that, but he insisted when they were in public.

Anakin and Padme strapped into the pilot and co pilot chairs.

"Ready angel?" he asked.

"Take us out baby," she replied, leaning over to kiss his cheek.

"Artoo says we're all clear, so here we go," Anakin replied, as he powered up the primary engines and runners. Anakin pulled back on the controls and took them up. Once clear of the hanger, Anakin pressed the throttle down and flew them out of the atmosphere. Padme smiled, as she looked over at him, seeing the joy on his face.

"This is amazing. She's definitely fast," Anakin said.

"Well, you still need to name her," Padme replied. Anakin smiled.

"I'll get back to you on that," Anakin said, as he began calculating the coordinates for the jump to hyperspace. He powered up the engines and made the jump. He set the course to take them in a circle so they would eventually end up back in Naboo space in a few hours. Padme unbuckled her belt and took his hand.

"I still have to give you the tour," she said. Anakin smiled and unbuckled his own to follow her. After showing him the entire ship, they came back to the sitting room.

"It's definitely bigger than our other ship and faster," Anakin replied, with a grin, as he plopped down on the sofa. Padme sat next to him and giggled.

"You and your need for speed," she joked. He looked at her slyly.

"So, what do you want to do?" he asked. She smirked and straddled his lap, bunching her dress up around her knees.

"This," she replied, as she brought her lips to his. She kissed him softly and sensually, as she traced her tongue along his bottom lip. He eagerly parted his lips, allowing her tongue to slip inside his mouth. Padme wrapped her arms around his neck, as she kissed him deeply. He smiled, as their lips parted again for a moment.

"You taste good," he whispered in a husky tone.

"You're not so bad yourself," she replied, as her lips collided with his again.

Padme moved her lips over his furiously, locking in several hard kisses. Her hands began unbuttoning his tunic and she roughly shoved it off his shoulders, before her hands resumed their exploration of his upper body. Anakin felt the fires of passion lick at his nerves, as she displayed her aggressiveness. He kissed her back hard, while his hands fumbled with the zipper on the back of her dress...

Anakin came out of the cabin, dressed and freshly showered. Padme was still in the bedroom dressing and he headed to the cockpit to check their location. Everything looked okay and Anakin leaned back in the pilot chair with a smile on his face. Suddenly, without warning, their ship dropped out of hyperspace. Anakin sat up and began checking the controls.

"Artoo, what's going on? Why did we drop out of hyperspace?" Anakin asked over the com. The little droid whirled in response.

"What do you mean you don't know?" Anakin asked, as he waited for Artoo to run a scan. Artoo began beeping and clicking excitedly, while Anakin read the translator.

"A virus in the computer? How did wepick up a virus?" Anakin asked. Artoo whirred in response.

"You're saying that it's been there?" Anakin asked, puzzled. Artoo chirped affirmatively in response.

"I don't like this at all Artoo. See what you can do with it. I'm going to get on the comm and see if I can raise anyone at the palace back in the Theed," Anakin replied, as he switched on the comm station.

"Ani, what's wrong?" Padme asked, coming into the cockpit. Anakin looked back to see his beautiful wife dressed in a simple lavender

dress, which was light and airy with no back. It was summer on Naboo and such attire was the standard for most Nabooan women. Her hair fell in ringlets around her and worry creased her brow, since she too had felt them drop out of hyperspace.

"Artoo says that there's some kind of computer virus in the ship's system. It's shut the whole ship down and I can't get us going again. He's trying to see if he can dispel the virus, while I try to get somebody on the comm," Anakin replied. Padme sat down in the co-pilot chair.

Anakin sent out their distress call and someone quickly responded.

"Anakin, this is Captain Typho. Are you and the Senator okay?" he asked. Anakin sighed in relief.

"We're fine captain, but the ship is dead in the water. The computer virus will have to be flushed out the system and unfortunately Artoo and I can't do that sitting up here," Anakin replied.

"Understood. There is a Republic cruiser nearby that happens to be en route to pass by Naboo. Queen Jamilla called in a request for their assistance. They accepted and they should be approaching you within the hour. They will contact you then and pull you in with the tractor beam," Typho said.

"Thank you captain," Anakin replied.

"Captain, can you please locate Master Kenobi and Lea and let them know that we're okay?" Padme asked.

"Absolutely Senator. We'll see you both in a few hours," Typho replied, as the transmission ended.

About an hour later, the Republic cruiser arrived and latched onto Anakin and Padme's ship, pulling them in. When docked, Anakin dropped the ramp and stepped down. He held his hand out and

helped Padme down as well, while Artoo followed them down. Anakin looked around curiously. He sensed something, but he wasn't sure what.

"Senator Amidala, I am Commander Lien. We should be arriving on Naboo in a few short hours," the officer said.

"Thank you commander," Padme replied.

"One of my crewmen will show you and your husband to a place where you can rest until we arrive," the commander said, as motioned for one of his ensigns to come forward.

"That won't be necessary commander. I'll take care of the Senator," a female voice called. Anakin's head shot up to the railing, only to see Aurra Sing standing there with Nute Gunray and Rune Haako.

"What is the meaning of this? Who are you!" The commander demanded.

"Step aside commander and you won't get hurt. I've come for her ladyship. These nice men next to me have promised a small fortune for her death," Aurra replied. Anakin pulled Padme close to him, as Aurra Sing flipped over the railing and landed on their level. Using the Force, she sealed all the exits to the docking bay and jammed the controls. Two Droidekas rolled in and surrounded the officers present, holding them hostage.

"No one is getting in or out of this docking bay without my permission. Now Senator, come quietly, and I may let your husband live," Aurra said. Anakin pulled Padme behind him and drew the light saber that he had built under Obi-Wan's guidance. He stepped forward and ignited the sapphire blade. Aurra was shocked, but hid it well with a smirk.

"Where did you learn to fight with such a weapon, boy?" Aurra taunted.

"None of your business. You want her, then you'll have to go through me," Anakin spat back at her. Aurra smirked and pulled back her cloak to retrieve her own saber. She ignited it, revealing an orange blade.

"I'm going to enjoy this immensely. After I make your wife watch me kill you, then she'll be next," Aurra said.

"We'll see," Anakin replied. With a fierce cry, Aurra leapt toward him, saber blazing. Anakin was ready and countered her, by spinning around and bringing his blade up to meet hers. Sapphire singed against orange, as they fought for control.

"Obi-Wan has taught you well. I'm curious as to what the Jedi Council will make of your esteemed master's actions against the code," Aurra taunted.

"That's none of your business either. It's not like you're going to live to tell about it anyway," Anakin retorted.

"We shall see boy, we shall see," she laughed evilly.

Nute Gunray approached Padme with Rune Haako beside him.

"It will be a pleasure to finally make you suffer Senator," Gunray said, as he drew a long vibro blade from his cloak. He pressed the tip under her chin, while Rune shackled her wrists. Gunray withdrew the blade and walked around behind her. Padme yelped, as he yanked her by the hair and pulled her back, while bringing the blade around to her throat.

"I want your last images to be your husband dying, before I slit your throat. You two have caused me too much trouble and it ends today in your blood!" Gunray spat at her.

Anakin parried and clashed furiously with Aurra Sing. This was his first real saber battle and his opponent was very experienced and quite formidable.

"Let the Force flow through you Anakin. You can defeat her young one," Qui-Gon told him.

"I don't know master. She's far more experienced than I am," Anakin replied.

"Yes, Anakin, but she uses the dark side to aid her. This gives the illusion that she is stronger. But you have something she doesn't have. Love young one, use love. She will not be able to defeat such a Force," Qui-Gon told him.

"Love," Anakin repeated.

"Yes Anakin. Remember all Obi-Wan's teachings and let the Force guide you. It will not lead you wrong," Qui-Gon said.

Suddenly, Padme's cry pierced the air around him, as he saw Gunray yanking her by the hair.

"Padme!" Anakin cried, as he saw the filthy Neimodian bring the blade to her throat. Aurra took this opportunity and knocked Anakin's feet out from under him. Anakin leapt back up and met her saber again with his own.

"You're no match for me boy. I grow tired of this little battle," Aurra said, as she clenched her fist. Suddenly, Anakin couldn't breathe, as Aurra began to choke him with the Force. Anakin resisted her Force choke with his own use of the Force and heaved in air, as he tried to over power her.

"You are a strong one, I'll give you that," she said, as she extinguished her saber and pulled out a vibro dagger.

"I think it will be nice to eliminate both you and your wife by the same means," Aurra said, as she pushed him against the wall. Anakin struggled to get loose from her hold, but she kept inching closer to him. His saber fell from his hand and extinguished itself upon impact with the ground. Aurra drew the saber back and thrust it into Anakin's

side. Anakin screamed in excruciating agony, as blood poured from the wound, staining his tunic crimson.

"Anakin!" Padme screamed in horror, her salty tears streaming down her face. Aurra pulled the dagger out with a jerk, causing Anakin to scream again. She pulled the blade back, and prepared to shove it into his heart.

"Nooooo!" Padme screamed, as she struggled with her shackles and cried uncontrollably. Anakin struggled to break free from her hold, as a wave of nausea swept through him.

"Obi-Wan," Anakin uttered.

Back on Naboo, Lea and Obi-Wan had returned to the palace upon hearing about Anakin and Padme's ship. Suddenly, Obi-Wan held his head in pain.

Obi-Wan!

"Obi-Wan, what is it?" Lea asked.

"It's Anakin. He's calling out to me through the Force. Something terrible is happening," Obi-Wan said, as he closed his eyes again.

"Anakin...Anakin, you must calm down. What is wrong?" Obi-Wan asked.

" *Aurra...Sing," Anakin rasped.*

Obi-Wan's eyes snapped open.

"What is it?" Lea asked.

"Anakin is fighting Aurra Sing...and he's hurt badly," Obi-Wan said gravely.

"Aurra Sing? But how can that be possible? They're supposed to be on a Republic cruiser," Lea exclaimed.

"They probably are. I'm willing to bet that Sing had this whole thing planned. There's a womp rat in the palace," Obi-Wan replied.

"What do you mean?" Lea asked.

"I think this little virus in their ship's computer was obviously planted by a contact that Sing has here on Naboo. Someone who has full access to everywhere in the palace," Obi-Wan replied.

"But who would betray Padme like that!" Lea cried. Obi-Wan placed his hand on her shoulder.

"Some will do anything for credits and power, my love," Obi-Wan reminded her. Lea looked around and seeing that they were completely alone, she wrapped her arms around Obi-Wan and laid her head against his chest.

"What are we going to do?" Lea asked.

"Unfortunately, there isn't much we can do. All we can do is trust in the Force and hope that Anakin can defeat her," Obi-Wan replied. He held the woman he loved, as she softly cried against him.

"Crying for you master won't help you. Goodbye Skywalker!" Aurra yelled, as she drew the dagger back, eager to shove it into his heart. Padme's piercing scream filled the air around them...

Caught

Disclaimer: It's not my sandbox. Just playing here.

AN: Here's chapter 22! Thanks for all the great reviews and sorry for the cliffhanger:)

Never Gone

Chapter 22: Caught

"Crying for you master won't help you. Goodbye Skywalker!" Aurra yelled, as she drew the dagger back, eager to shove it into his heart. Padme's piercing scream filled the air around them. Anakin struggled against her Force hold. He managed to move to the side, as the dagger came crashing toward him. Instead of piercing his heart, because of his movement, she plunged the dagger into his left shoulder. Another cry of excruciating pain was heard from Anakin. His breath came in ragged gasps. Anakin growled in pain, as he lifted his leg and shoved his boot into her abdomen, breaking her Force hold on him. Aurra fell back, hitting the ground. She was truly surprised that he had managed to break her hold on him, for it had been a strong hold. Anakin stumbled, unconsciousness threatening to sweep through him. He sunk to his hands and knees, gasping for air and trying to push back the intense pain searing in his shoulder and side. Blood pooled around him, as it trickled from his wounds. Aurra stood up and kicked him in the stomach, causing him to tumbled onto his back. Then, she proceeded to kick him in the chest and gut several more times, ignoring Padme's cries for her to cease. She stepped on his shoulder, beside the blade that still protruded from it. With a rough jerk, she pulled it out and examined the blood stained tool with satisfaction. Anakin cried out in pain, as she removed it. Blood pooled in the open wound, rushing out now that the blade was no longer there. Anakin fought unconsciousness and the nausea that was overwhelming. He knew that if gave into it,

Padme would die. Tears welled in his eyes, as he realized that he might not be able to protect her much longer.

"You're as good as dead Skywalker," Aurra said, as she kicked him one last time. Then, slowly, she walked toward Padme with a cruel smile on her face.

"N...no, Pad...me!" Anakin rasped, as he tried to get up.

" *Anakin, you must get up,"* Qui-Gon's voice spoke to him.

"I'm...so...rry angel," Anakin rasped, as blackness began to invade his vision.

Aurra Sing snarled evilly, as she stood before the sobbing woman. Aurra yanked Padme's long hair and put the dagger to her throat.

"Don't worry Senator, you'll be joining your husband now," Aurra said. Padme's scream caused his eyes to shoot open.

" *She needs you,"* Qui-Gon's voice urged him. Anakin looked to his side and saw his saber lying there. He held his hand out to it, commanding it to him. It shook and finally obeyed it's master, sliding into his hand.

"You're about to make me a very rich woman, Senator," Aurra said, as she drew the blade up, ready to slit Padme's throat. She was enjoying herself so much, that she never sensed Anakin and that he had managed to get up. She felt a searing pain in her arm, as the severed limb, along with the dagger, fell to the ground. She gaped in horror, as she whirled around, only to see Anakin standing there, a mixture on intense pain and contempt on his face.

"I would...have thought that...you would have known...never to turn your back on your...enemy," Anakin said, his shoulders heaving,as he lunged at her, plunging his saber through her heart, before she had time to react. He pulled it out and Aurra Sing slumped the floor,

dead. Anakin stumbled, but tried to balance himself, as he pointed his blade at Nute Gunray.

"Call...off your droidekas now!" Anakin ordered fiercely. Nute Gunray and Rune Haako cowered before him.

"NOW!" Anakin screamed, half in pain, half in rage. The viceroy waved his hand at the droids and they rolled away.

"Now...get away from her, before...I kill you!" Anakin screamed, as Padme came to his side, helping to hold him up. Nute Gunray and Rune Haako backed away in fear.

"Commander...see that...these two are arrested," Anakin rasped. Finally, his legs gave out and he crumped to the ground.

"Anakin!" Padme cried, as she knelt beside him and pulled his head into her lap. She sobbed, as she looked at her hands, which were covered in blood. There was so much blood. With Aurra Sing dead, the doors were no longer being held shut and Clone Troopers swarmed in. Commander Lien began issuing orders.

"Take these two to a holding cell and put them on 24-hour watch," he told two of his troopers. He then pointed to four of his other troopers.

"You four, get Skywalker to sick bay. See what the healers can do for him until we get to Naboo," the commander said.

"Milady, please, we must get your husband to sick bay. I'll escort you there, so you can be near him," Commander Lien said. Padme nodded and allowed him to help her up. Two of the Clones carefully picked Anakin up, while the other two led the way.

Lea ran through the palace and out toward the garden, where she knew she would likely find Obi-Wan. He was probably still beating himself up for letting them go.

"Obi-Wan!" Lea called. He turned to meet her eyes.

"Have you heard anything?" he asked.

"There sending Anakin and Padme down in a shuttle. They'll be landing in the docking bay in a few minutes," Lea said. Obi-Wan nodded and followed her into the palace and to the docking bay. Lea wanted so much to reach out to him and hug him, but she knew she couldn't in public.

The shuttle docked and four Clone troopers carried Anakin out on a stretcher. Padme followed them out. Her eyes were red and puffy and tear tracks stained her cheeks. Her dress and hands were covered in dried blood that everyone assumed was Anakin's.

Obi-Wan and Lea rushed up to them and Obi-Wan placed a hand on Anakin's pale forehead.

"We stopped the bleeding in his wounds, but he has lost a lot blood," one of the troopers reported.

"Get him to sickbay immediately," Obi-Wan ordered.

"Yes sir," the Clone replied, as he and his men carried him off. Lea held Padme, as she sobbed.

"There was...so much blood Lea. I...I can't lose him," Padme sobbed. Lea hugged her tightly.

"You're not going to lose him Padme. He's too strong for that. Let's go get you cleaned up, okay?" Lea asked gently.

"No, I want to go to sickbay. I'm not leaving him!" Padme yelled.

"Padme, they're going to have to take him into surgery and you can't go in when they're doing that. Let's get you cleaned up and then I'll take you there," Lea said, as she looked back at Obi-Wan.

"Is it okay if I let Dorme and Sabe take you? I'll catch up to you in a few minutes," Lea said. Padme nodded and allowed her handmaidens to lead her away. Lea walked up and placed her hand on his shoulder.

"How in blazes could I allow this to happen?" Obi-Wan said, almost angrily.

"Obi-Wan, none of this is your fault! None of us could have known that Aurra Sing would go to the lengths that she did," Lea replied.

"He wasn't ready to face someone like her," Obi-Wan said.

"But he did and it's over. And he won. He's going to be fine, he's a strong one," Lea assured him.

"When the council finds out, I'll be reprimanded for sure," Obi-Wan replied quietly.

"You don't know that. I'm sure Anakin will have something to say about that. None of us blame you Obi-Wan and surely Anakin doesn't," Lea replied. Obi-Wan just lowered his head.

"No more pity parties, my love. Let's go to sick bay and see how he is," Lea said, as they walked there side by side.

Padme, Lea, and Obi-Wan sat in the waiting room for what seemed like hours. One of the healers finally came up and all three of them jumped up.

"Please tell me, is he okay?" Padme asked, shakily.

"Your husband lost a lot of blood Senator, but he is a fighter for sure. We have replenished him with a blood transfusion and we have cleaned the stab wounds that he suffered. We just took him out of the bacta tank and it has successfully repaired the flesh wounds. We are ready to start the bone regenerator to fix his three broken ribs.

Then, he will just need plenty of rest. He has asked to see all of you, but for now, I can only admit one of you until we are done repairing his broken ribs. I assume that you will be the one to see him Senator?"

"Yes, thank you," Padme said, as she shook his hand and quickly rushed passed him. She burst into the medical bay and saw her Anakin laying there on a table. She rushed over to him, tears falling down her cheeks.

"Oh Ani," she cried, as she tousled her fingers through his shaggy blonde hair, which was still damp from the bacta tank.

"Don't cry angel, I'm fine," he assured her, as he reached up wiped one of her tears away with his thumb. The healer allowed them a few moments together, before Padme was ushered out so they could begin repairing his ribs.

Lea entered her quarters at the palace and flopped down on her bed. She closed her eyes and sighed deeply. Flipping over on her stomach, she turned on the holocom. She knew that the attempt on Padme's life aboard the Republic cruiser was probably all over. But what she saw, left her speechless. It seemed from what she was gathering that there had been a holonet reporter embedded on the Republic cruiser who happened to be in docking bay when everything had happened. She watched, as they showed the entire battle between Aurra and Anakin, however gruesome it was. She knew that it would not be long before the Council would be calling to speak with Obi-Wan...

After the healers had finished, Padme had ordered that Anakin be moved to her suite in the palace. The healers really had no objections, as Anakin's open wounds had been closed and repaired. His broken ribs had finished mending, thanks to the bone regenerators and all he required now was lots of rest. Despite his

condition a few hours ago, Anakin was awake and mostly just very sore. Padme sat beside him, as he and Obi-Wan talked.

"I want you to know that I'm very proud of you Anakin," Obi-Wan said. Anakin smiled.

"Thanks Obi-Wan, but I just used the skills you taught me and I'm still not sure how I found the strength to defeat her. She was a lot stronger," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan smiled and glanced over at Padme who was resting her head against his good shoulder.

"I think I know," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin followed his gaze and smiled at his beautiful wife, while placing a soft kiss on her lips.

"Yeah, I guess you're right. But you can do something for me, you know," Anakin replied.

"Anything," Obi-Wan replied.

"Stop blaming yourself, cause none of this is your fault," Anakin replied.

"Am I that transparent?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Yes, but Lea also told Padme that you're blaming yourself," Anakin replied, with a smirk. Suddenly Lea burst into Padme quarters and hurried over to them.

"Lea, what's wrong?" Obi-Wan asked, taking her arm.

"We have a problem," Lea said.

"What is it?" Padme asked.

"There must have been a holonet reporter aboard that ship. They recorded the entire fight with Aurra," Lea said.

"You mean the light saber battle in particular, don't you," Anakin replied. She nodded.

"It's all over the holonet. They're questioning the Jedi Council about how a non-Jedi could fight with a light saber so well and actually defeat a former Jedi. The Council has not responded yet," Lea said, her eyes mirroring the pain in her heart. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," Padme called. It was Captain Typho who entered.

"I'm sorry for the intrusion milady, but Master Kenobi has a call from Coruscant. I believe it is from the Temple," Typho spoke. Obi-Wan nodded.

"Thank you captain, Obi-Wan can take it in my office," Padme replied. Obi-Wan nodded and left to face them.

"Stupid...this is my fault," Anakin said.

"Anakin, you can't blame yourself, just like Obi-Wan can't blame himself. You did what you had to do to protect Padme and yourself," Lea said quietly, as she started to leave.

"Tell Obi-Wan that I've gone to my room," Lea said. Padme nodded and watched her leave.

"I've probably cost Obi-Wan his career," Anakin said.

"Ani, this is not your fault. We would be dead right now if not for the skills Obi-Wan taught you. I don't regret it and if you ask him, he'll tell you that he doesn't either," Padme replied.

"You think so?" he asked. Padme kissed him gently.

"I know so, my love. Now, you need your rest," Padme said, as she helped him lay back down.

"Now sleep Ani. If the healers find out that you're not resting, they'll make you come back and spend the night in the infirmary," Padme told him. Anakin shuddered at the thought.

"Good night angel," he said, as he yawned.

"Good night Ani," she replied, as she brushed her fingers through his bangs. The feeling of her fingers running through his hair lulled him into a deep sleep.

Obi-Wan faced the stern faces of Master Windu and Master Yoda, as their images came up on the holoscreen.

"Masters," Obi-Wan bowed respectfully.

"Much it seems, we have to discuss, master Kenobi," Yoda said.

"Yes master," Obi-Wan replied.

"We wish to discuss this in person. Yoda and I are leaving for Naboo in the morning. We will arrive tomorrow evening," Mace said simply.

"I understand masters, I shall see you then," Obi-Wan said, as the transmission blinked out. Obi-Wan sighed and sensed that Anakin and Padme were asleep. He sensed that Lea had left and he quietly slipped out to find her.

Obi-Wan quietly entered her quarters and found her sitting at her dressing table. She was in her nightgown already and brushing her hair out. Upon seeing him, she set the brush down and went to him.

"What did they say?" she asked.

"They are leaving for Naboo in the morning. They want to discuss everything in person," Obi-Wan replied. Lea hugged him and laid her head against his chest.

"Oh Obi-Wan," she cried.

"I will have to tell them everything," he told her. She looked up at him.

"Everything?" she asked, in barely a whisper.

"Yes my love. I will have to defend myself and so I will have to come clean with everything," Obi-Wan replied sadly.

"What's...what's going to happen to us?" Lea asked hesitantly, not being able to meet his eyes. Obi-Wan lifted her chin.

"They will accept that you are the love of my life and they will except that I wish to continue training Anakin, or I will resign my position as a Jedi," Obi-Wan told her honestly.

"But...being a Jedi has been your life! I...I can't ask you to give that up for me...I can't!" Lea cried.

"You're not asking me Lea, I'm doing what my heart tells me is right. I love you Lea," Obi-Wan said, as he leaned down and kissed her gently.

"I love you too Obi-Wan," she replied, as his lips met hers again in a searing kiss...

The Council's Decision

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here, cause it's fun.

AN: Here's chapter 23! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 23: The Council's Decision

Anakin walked through the garden, hoping to find Obi-Wan. He quickly spotted him by the pond and knew he was meditating. Or trying to, as Anakin could feel the conflict of emotions raging around him. Padme had insisted that he stay in bed today, and for the most of the morning, he obeyed. But now it was nearing evening, and Obi-Wan would be meeting with Master Yoda and Master Windu soon. Anakin had decided that he was not letting Obi-Wan face them alone. Obi-Wan turned, sensing Anakin's presence.

"What are you doing out of bed? Obi-Wan asked.

"I feel fine. Just a little stiff and sore. Besides, I'm not letting you face them alone. This is just as much my fault as it is yours," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan sighed and decided not to argue anymore, for he knew Anakin was determined to do this.

"Well then, I suppose we should go. They should be arriving very soon," Obi-Wan said. Anakin nodded, as he and Obi-Wan returned inside of the palace.

Anakin and Obi-Wan sat across from Mace and Yoda in one of the palace's conference rooms.

"Anakin, Master Yoda and I do not require your presence. This meeting is between us and Obi-Wan," Mace said.

"With all due respect masters, I would like to stay," Anakin replied.

"Stay you will Anakin. Explain your actions you both will," Yoda said.

"Obi-Wan, why did you not accompany Senator Amidala on her excursion," Mace asked.

"That is entirely my fault Master Windu. Padme and I decided we wanted to go by ourselves. It should have been perfectly safe and there was no way any of us could have known that we would be betrayed by someone right here in the palace. This wasn't Obi-Wan's fault and we're already investigating who could have possibly uploaded a virus into our ship's computer," Anakin said.

"You should not have allowed it, but I believe we have more pressing matter to discuss. I think you know what I'm talking about," Mace replied sternly.

"It's my fault. Obi-Wan shouldn't be punished," Anakin said. Obi-Wan turned to him.

"Anakin, I appreciate what you're trying to do, but you don't have to defend me," Obi-Wan replied.

"Why train, young Skywalker, when not permitted by the Council?" Yoda asked.

"I felt I was doing what was right. Before I began training him, he already possessed abilities in the Force and I thought it was best to hone these abilities and train him to understand the Force," Obi-Wan replied.

"Your old master's defiance I sense in you. Training the boy, because Qui-Gon's spirit wishes it, you are," Yoda said.

"Yes master, Qui-Gon does wish for Anakin to be trained. I believe I am doing the right thing by doing so," Obi-Wan replied.

"If not for Obi-Wan's training, Padme and I would be dead. I could have never defeated Aurra Sing, if he had not taught me how to fight with a light saber," Anakin argued.

"It was not his place to decide anything. The council was against sanctioning your training ten years ago, and our position has not changed. You are far too old with far too many attachments to be learning the ways of the Force. It's too dangerous," Mace replied sternly.

"Instead of coming down on Obi-Wan, why don't you try finding Count Dooku! It's no secret that's he behind the assassination attempts on my wife!" Anakin yelled.

"Dooku has no real connection or reason for wanting the Senator dead. Viceroy Gunray is responsible," Mace disagreed.

"You're wrong, I've felt a dark presence," Anakin replied.

"When feel this presence, young Skywalker?" Yoda asked.

"Um...only a couple times. Never here on Naboo, but on Coruscant," Anakin replied.

"That's impossible. We would have sensed it if there was a Sith Lord on Coruscant," Mace replied confidently, but Yoda didn't look convinced.

"Then you're blind!" Anakin argued. Yoda tapped his gimmer stick on the ground.

"Enough this is. Anakin, discuss a few things with Obi-Wan we must in private," Yoda said. Anakin nodded in defeat and left the room. He felt around for Padme's presence, and found that she was in her office. He left in that direction.

Anakin slipped into Padme's office and saw her sitting behind her desk, with stacks of datapads everywhere. He walked around behind her and leaned down over her, kissing her neck. Padme smiled and giggled, as he feathered his lips along her skin.

"If you keep doing that, I'll never get any work done," she chided.

"Good, you work too hard anyway," he replied. She set the datapad that she was reading down and turned her head, so he could kiss her lips.

"You are very distracting," Padme replied, as she eagerly pressed her lips to his. She moaned, as Anakin plundered her mouth, passionately kissing her till she was breathless. Just as Anakin was about to lift her onto the desk, Lea came through the door.

"Oh, geez you two. You might want to lock the door next time," Lea chided, as she set a couple more datapads on Padme's desk.

"How did the meeting go?" Lea asked.

"It wasn't going well. They told me to leave so they could talk to Obi-Wan. Mace wouldn't listen to anything I had to say," Anakin replied sadly. Lea sighed and decided to go wait outside the meeting room. Anakin and Padme followed her not long after.

"Your actions border on means for expulsion. But because our numbers are spread so thin, we have decided that we will only reprimand you. We will leave for Coruscant in the morning," Mace said.

"Masters, I cannot return to Coruscant. My place is here," Obi-Wan replied calmly.

"No, your place is at the temple. This assignment is over," Mace replied sternly.

"Something you need to confess, Obi-Wan?" Yoda asked. Obi-Wan nodded.

"You have formed an attachment to the boy," Mace said.

"Yes master, I have. But that is not the only attachment I have formed. I have formed a romantic attachment as well," Obi-Wan confessed.

"A romantic attachment? You know the code Obi-Wan. We do not allow attachments, especially romantic ones. They are dangerous, thus why training Skywalker was a mistake," Mace said.

"I'm sorry masters, but I am in love with Lea Naberrie and I cannot give her up. I implore the council to allow me to continue to serve despite my attachments. I am confident that I can do both and believe that I deserve a chance to prove that," Obi-Wan replied.

"Absolutely not. You know the code forbids attachment! You are the last Jedi that I would expect this from. What kind of influence have you allowed Skywalker to have over you?" Mace said, getting angry.

"Anakin doesn't have anything to do with this. I love Lea and I did try to ignore my feelings for her. But I couldn't and if I am made to choose between her and the code...then I choose her," Obi-Wan said. Betrayal and hurt flashed in Mace Windu's eyes.

"Well, then I guess there is nothing left to discuss," Mace replied.

"A great Jedi you were Obi-Wan. But dangerous, attachment is. Agree with Master Windu, I must. If choose to keep your attachment you do, then no choice we have, but to expel you from the Jedi order," Yoda said sadly.

"I can't leave her master, it would destroy us both," Obi-Wan replied.

"Sorry I am then. Expelled from the Jedi Order, you are," Yoda said sadly. Obi-Wan took a deep breath and nodded.

"Your light saber please," Mace said sternly. Obi-Wan handed the silver cylindrical weapon to Mace.

"Make sure that you see to it that Anakin relinquishes his as well," Mace said.

"Anakin is not a Jedi and never was. He is free to own whatever he wants and he built it himself. I cannot force him to give it up, nor can you," Obi-Wan replied, as he turned and left the meeting room.

"Disturbing this course of events is," Yoda said.

"But we had to expel him! He not only formed attachments with unwillingness to give them up, but he also trained the boy without our permission!" Mace argued.

"Hope I do, that correct in our decision we were," Yoda replied.

"Of course we were," Mace replied confidently. But Yoda didn't look so convinced.

Lea, Padme, and Anakin all waited for Obi-Wan to come out of the meeting room. When he did, they knew what happened instantly, as his saber was missing from his belt.

"Obi-Wan? I'm so sorry," Lea said, as she wrapped him in a hug. He hugged her back tightly.

"I'm sorry, I never wanted you to give up being a Jedi for me," Lea cried. He lifted her chin.

"This is not your fault Lea. I had to make a choice and I chose you. There are still many ways things that I can do for a career. Anakin has taught me that," Obi-Wan replied. Lea kissed him gently.

"Obi-Wan, I'm sorry. They're wrong, they shouldn't have expelled you," Anakin insisted.

"It's all right Anakin, it is over and I made my choice. And I will have none of you blaming yourselves," Obi-Wan told all three of them.

"Obi-Wan's right, neither of you can blame yourselves. We're a family and we'll be fine as long as we're together," Padme said. Obi-Wan smiled.

"Padme's right," Obi-Wan replied. As he said that, Master Windu and Master Yoda came out of the room.

"Master Yoda, I can have my handmaidens prepare rooms for you and Master Windu for the night," Padme said politely.

"Thank you Senator, but there is no need. Return to Coruscant this evening, master Windu and I will," Yoda replied, as he and Mace headed for the docking bay where their ship rested.

"Perhaps we should return to the Lake Country for tonight," Lea suggested. Padme nodded.

"I'll meet you by the speeder in a few minutes. There's something I want to do first," Anakin said, as he kissed her quickly.

He entered the docking bay and approached Captain Panaka.

"Were you able to find anything on the holo camera recordings?" Anakin asked.

"I'm sorry Anakin, but whoever did this, cut the cameras. We don't have any feed from around the time the ship would have been sabotaged," Panaka replied.

"Who knew about the ship that the queen was going to give to us? Can you compile a list of names for me?" Anakin asked. Panaka visibly tensed and Anakin noticed. He used the Force to try and sense what Panaka was feeling, but the man surprisingly had strong

mind shields. Was he hiding something? Anakin wondered, as the captain sighed.

"Anakin, please tell me you are not accusing someone in the royal cabinet," Panaka replied.

"I apologize captain, but this is my wife's life we are talking about. If there is a traitor among us, I'm going to find them," Anakin replied. Panaka faked a smile.

"Of course, forgive me. I will see if I can get a list together for you tomorrow," Panaka replied. Anakin smiled, watching the captain carefully.

"Thank you Captain," Anakin said, as he headed back to meet Padme.

The four of them returned to Varykino for the evening. After they arrived, they shared dinner and wine together, before retiring for the night...

"I think he may suspect something," Panaka said, as he conversed with acting Senator Tarkin over the holocom.

"I will inform the Chancellor then. He will have to see that Skywalker is taken care of if we are to eliminate Amidala as well," Tarkin said.

"From what I've seen, it seems that the Jedi have expelled Kenobi. We will have to contend with him as well," Panaka said.

"The Chancellor will know what to do. Just make sure you do not allow Skywalker to find out that it was you who sabotaged the ship. You would stand to lose a great deal, you know," Tarkin warned.

"Don't worry Senator, I have no intention of losing the chance of being regional governor of the entire Chrommell sector. Some boy will not stand in my way," Panaka said.

"See that you don't," Tarkin said, as the transmission cut out...

Will Anakin's suspicions be founded? And if so, will they lead he and Obi-Wan closer to finding the Sith Lord?

Conspiracy Theory

Disclaimer: I don't own anything. George's sandbox.

AN: Here's chapter 24! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 24: Conspiracy Theory

A few days had passed and Anakin and Padme remained in the Lake Country for the most part. In the mornings, Padme would deal with any Senate business over the holocom with acting Senator Tarkin. While she was busy with that, Anakin would be training or in Theed investigating. This was one such morning and Padme was on the holocom with a concerned Governor Bibble.

"Governor, I ask that you not take Anakin's interrogation personal. He is only trying to find the culprit and was in no way implicating you," Padme said, trying to ease the Governor's temper.

"I know that he was not accusing me, but he is disrupting the daily business of the staff around here. He has disrupted security and the handmaidens are very distracted by him," Governor Bibble replied. Padme had to suppress a giggle and an eye roll. She had no doubt as to why the handmaidens were distracted by him.

"Governor, I realize that Captain Panaka does not see the necessity of Anakin's investigation and he believes that the culprit is not inside the palace. But Anakin does and he is my husband. If he believes so strongly in this, then I do to, for I hold no one's opinion and trust higher than his. I'm positive that he will soon draw a conclusion to this investigation and I am confident that he will find the culprit. Someone wants my husband and I dead and we are determined to find out who," Padme replied.

"Forgive me Senator, I was being insensitive. I was only expressing concerns that a few of the staff around here have had. You know that you and your husband have mine and the Queen's full support," Governor Bibble apologized.

"Thank you Governor," Padme said, as the transmission cut out. She scribbled a few things down and quickly retrieved another datapad, before accepting Senator Tarkin's call.

"Good morning milady," Tarkin greeted.

"Good morning Senator," Padme greeted in return.

"I wish I had better news, but I'm sure you've read the reports by now," Tarkin replied.

"I have. What can you tell me about this General Grevious?" Padme asked.

"Not much I'm afraid. Peace talks were going well on Cato Neimodia a few days ago, when suddenly this odd-looking droid like man came in and began killing the negotiators. It was terribly tragic," Tarkin said sadly.

"Is it true that he fought with a light saber?" Padme asked.

"Yes, more than one actually. It is obvious that he has received training, possibly from Count Dooku himself," Tarkin replied.

"Milady, the war has escalated. The Senate is calling for more emergency powers for the Chancellor so he can strive even harder to end this war. The motion will see the floor today and it is expected to pass," Tarkin told her.

"More emergency powers is not what's best for this Republic. You must oppose this Senator," Padme replied.

"I will do my best milady," Tarkin said, as Anakin came into the room, having returned from Theed.

"Ah, Anakin, I was hoping to see you. The Chancellor and I want to both thank you for taking such good care of our lovely Senator. You are the talk of the holonet my boy. Have you turned up anything in your investigation?" Tarkin said.

"I certainly wouldn't tell you if I had," Anakin thought to himself.

"Nothing solid yet Senator, but I'm confident I will get to the bottom of this," Anakin replied vaguely.

"Me too my boy. Now, if you'll both excuse me, I must end this little visit. The Senate will be called into session soon," Tarkin replied.

"Thank you for your call Senator," Padme replied politely.

"You're very welcome milady, take care," Tarkin replied, as his transmission blinked off. Padme sighed heavily and slumped in her chair.

"You okay angel?" he asked, placing his hand on her shoulder. She smiled and stood up to hug him.

"I'm fine. And if I remember correctly, you and I have a date which involves swimming to the island for a day on the beach," Padme replied, as she kissed him softly.

"Yeah, we should go get changed," Anakin replied.

"So, any leads that you didn't want to share with Tarkin?" Padme asked, as they changed into their bathing suits.

"Well, no real leads. Whoever it is, covered their tracks well. I interrogated more of the security and a couple of the Queen's handmaidens kept following me around, though I'm not sure why. I do have a gut feeling though," Anakin replied. Padme smiled at his confusion.

"Sweetie, the handmaidens were following you around, because they have a crush on you," Padme replied sweetly.

"Oh," Anakin replied, still looking confused.

"So what is this gut feeling you have? I know you, and usually your gut feelings are right," Padme replied. Anakin smiled. She was his one true champion...well she and his mom maybe.

"Well, even if I am right, I still can't prove it yet," Anakin replied.

"Who do you suspect?" she asked.

"Captain Panaka," he replied.

"Wow," Padme said, letting the implications sink in.

"I know it's hard to believe, but he's hiding something," Anakin replied.

"It is a little hard to believe, but if you think he's responsible, then I believe you," Padme replied.

"Obi-Wan agrees. He doesn't trust Panaka either. He says that ten years ago, he doesn't remember the captain having such good mind shields. But now, you can't sense anything from him," Anakin replied.

"Are you saying Captain Panaka is Force sensitive?" Padme asked.

"No, actually he's not. But those that aren't Force sensitive can learn basics like how to guard your mind against someone who is Force sensitive. I taught you how and Obi-Wan taught Lea so that you would be able to guard your thoughts," Anakin replied.

"You're saying that you think someone has taught him how to do this?" Padme asked.

"It's possible," Anakin replied.

"And if it wasn't a Jedi, then it would have had to be a Sith," Padme concluded. Anakin nodded.

"What are you going to do now?" she asked.

"I'm not sure yet. I have no way to prove my suspicions and no way to prove he did anything," Anakin replied. Padme hugged him.

"I'm sure you'll figure this out. If he's really the one, I know you will. I've known him a long time and it's a good bet that he'll underestimate you, because you're younger and more inexperienced than him. I think that's where he'll make his mistake," Padme replied. Anakin smiled down at her.

"Well, thank you for the vote of confidence. I hope you're right," Anakin replied, as was now noticing her attire. It was a bright blue two piece bathing suit, leaving practically nothing to his imagination.

"You know...we could forget the beach...and stay here," Anakin said, as he began kissing her neck.

"Oh no you don't. They'll be plenty of time for *that* later," Padme told him with a wink.

"Promise?" he asked.

"Oh, I promise," she replied, as they left for the beach.

Later, while Anakin and Padme were out, Obi-Wan received a call from Chancellor Palpatine. Puzzled, Obi-Wan took it immediately wondering what it could possibly be.

"Good afternoon Chancellor," Obi-Wan greeted.

"Good afternoon Master Kenobi," Palpatine replied.

"To what do I owe this pleasure Chancellor?" Obi-Wan asked politely.

"I just wanted to offer my regrets on your expulsion from the Jedi Order. I believe they have made a terrible error in judgement," Palpatine said.

"Thank you Chancellor, that is kind of you to say," Obi-Wan replied.

"Well, I know you are someone who doesn't like to beat around the bush, so I will get right to why I am calling. I can't in good conscience see someone with your skills and talents not serving our grand Republic. After all, you've taken young Anakin under your wing and he has benefitted greatly from your teachings," Palpatine said.

"Are you offering me a job, Chancellor?" Obi-Wan asked. Palpatine chuckled.

"You always have been perceptive. Yes, I am Obi-Wan," Palpatine replied.

"What do the duties entail?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Well, it is a well compensated position in the Judicial department. You duties will be whatever I need handled by someone with the ability to sense corruption and deceit. Your first task would be overseeing the jury selection for Nute Gunray and his accomplices' trial. As you know, his first trial was a joke. The jury members were obviously on the Trade Federation payroll and I think it is imperative that this not happen again. He deserves to be in prison for a very long time," Palpatine said. Obi-Wan was almost taken aback. Was Palpatine actually trying to do something noble?

"I am honored that you would consider me for such a high ranking position Chancellor. Is it possible that I could give you my answer in the morning?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Of course, take the evening to discuss it with your family by all means. I'll look forward to hearing from you in the morning. Good evening," the Chancellor replied, as his transmission winked out. Obi-Wan sat back in the chair, now deep in his thoughts...

After a lazy swim over to the island, Anakin and Padme rested on the beach. Since they had come back to Naboo, Padme had begun

teaching Anakin how to swim. Like most things, he picked it up quickly and was now able to keep up with her. They were alone on the beach, as she had seen to it that there were no visitors to Varykino today.

"Ani, will you put some sun oil on my back?" Padme asked, as laid on her stomach on her towel. Anakin smiled and squirted some into his palm. He rubbed his hands together and began massaging it into her lower back, slowly working higher. He worked up her back, sensually massaging her, giving her soft chills down her spine. He smirked, as she moaned a little and he slowly untied her top. He pushed the fabric out of the way, so he could massage the tension out of her back.

"Your back is a mess of knots angel," he told her.

"Blame the Senate," she mumbled.

"Oh I do. I'm almost positive I can help you relax," he replied, with a smirk. She giggled.

"Me too," she replied, as she leaned over and kissed his lips. It was late in the afternoon and the sun had dipped lower in the sky. The surf of the tide began to lap at their feet, as Anakin kissed her passionately. He rolled her onto her back and his lips descended upon the nape of her neck. Entwined together, they made love in the surf...

As they bathed in the afterglow, they kissed softly and sensually, as the tide continued to splash around them. Later, they got dressed and swam back home.

Anakin and Padme showered and dressed once they got home, before joining Lea and Obi-Wan for dinner.

At dinner, Obi-Wan explained his earlier conversation with the Chancellor to Anakin and Padme. He and Lea had already discussed

it this afternoon and Obi-Wan was leaning strongly toward accepting it.

"I think it is a great opportunity Obi-Wan. Having your hand in the Judicial system would surely put those in prison who justly deserve it. There have been far too many criminals that have slipped through the cracks," Padme said, as she took another bite of her shurra desert.

"Padme's right. With you overseeing jury selection, Gunray will finally go to prison where he belongs. Then he can't hurt Padme anymore," Anakin said, as he squeezed her hand.

"Well, I'm glad you both approve, because I am strongly considering accepting it. I do worry about your training though Anakin," Obi-Wan replied.

"I'll keep up on my exercises and then you can check my progress when you come to visit. Plus, Padme should be able to return to the Senate soon, which means we'll all be back on Coruscant," Anakin replied.

"I'm not sure about that Anakin. With Gunray's trial in progress, there will be danger still, especially since I highly suspect Padme will be called to testify. Even you may have to testify and until then, Naboo is probably the safest. Gunray is a hero on Cato-Neimodia and his trial will not sit well with them. There may be a lot of anger directed at Naboo," Obi-Wan said. Anakin sat deep in thought.

"We need to find that evidence. I'm almost positive that Panaka has something to do with all of this. I just don't know what exactly or even what his motive could be," Anakin replied.

"Money often overpowers loyalty," Obi-Wan reminded.

"Someone has definitely promised him money and maybe even power. But...I don't know. It just feels like there's more to it than that," Anakin replied.

"Anakin, I think you might be over thinking this a little. It is perfectly understandable that your worry for your wife is giving you the need to find something," Obi-Wan reasoned. Anakin nodded. What Obi-Wan was saying made perfect sense.

"If he's chosen money over loyalty, then it's a good bet that he is no longer loyal to Queen Jamilla either," Lea reminded.

"Lea's right. Jamilla and I have been friends for years. I know she would never betray me," Padme replied.

"It's very unsettling. Panaka has been serving in the royal guard since back during Palpatine's first term as Senator," Lea mentioned. That's when it hit Anakin and a look of complete astonishment came over his face.

"What is it?" Obi-Wan asked.

"That's it Obi-Wan. Panaka's loyalty lies with Palpatine and it probably always has," Anakin replied.

"Are you saying that you think Palpatine is behind all this?" Obi-Wan asked.

"I'm not sure if he's behind it, but he's definitely involved. Is it possible he could be involved with the Sith?" Anakin asked. Obi-Wan thought for a moment.

"It is possible. I've felt dark tremors around Palpatine before, though I never found anything distinguishable," Obi-Wan replied.

"Are you saying that you believe Palpatine could be involved with the attempts on my life?" Padme asked.

"It's very possible angel. You are a strong advocate against him and Naboo is his home planet. That likely causes him some anger and even embarrassment that the Senator of his home planet does not support him," Anakin reasoned.

"But how in the world could we ever prove something like that?" Lea asked.

"It will not be easy, but perhaps in my dealings on Coruscant and with Anakin here on Naboo, we may be able to uncover something," Obi-Wan replied.

"I think Tarkin is obviously involved as well. Placing Tarkin in the acting Senator position gives Palpatine the support he wants from Naboo," Anakin replied.

"But so far, he has made no motions other than what he has been instructed to by Padme," Obi-Wan reminded.

"Yet," Anakin replied. Suddenly, Dorme entered.

"I'm sorry to bother you milady, but I think there is something on the holonet that you need to see," Dorme said. The four of them looked warily at each other, before getting up and filing into the sitting room.

The face of Twi'lek reporter appeared on the screen.

"There were big developments in the Senate today. A motion to grant Chancellor Palpatine more emergency powers has passed. The motion was heavily opposed by the delegation of two-thousand, but there was a surprising turn of events today. Support for the motion came from Naboo, which in the past has never supported the cause of the war to any extent. Acting Senator Tarkin made a speech today, turning Naboo's support to the Chancellor and urging other systems to do so as well. It is unknown as whether or not this motion was supported by Senator Amidala, who has always opposed such actions in the past...

"Like I said, yet," Anakin replied, as he put his arm around Padme's shoulders. Padme sunk onto the sofa and Anakin sat beside her, trying to comfort her.

"I told him to do everything he could to oppose that amendment. I knew it would likely pass, but he wasn't supposed to advocate for it!" Padme yelled.

"I'm so sorry angel," he said, as she began sobbing on his shoulder.

"I'm telling you Obi-Wan. Tarkin and Palpatine had this whole thing planned. They have to be in on everything," Anakin replied.

"I believe you Anakin and we will do everything we can to prove it," Obi-Wan replied.

Later, Obi-Wan and Lea were in bed talking about their decision.

"Do you think it's a good idea to take this position?" Lea asked.

"I do. That way, I can be on Coruscant to secretly investigate the Chancellor as well. There is definitely something going on," Obi-Wan replied. Lea nodded in agreement and snuggled close to him.

"Obi-Wan, I know that I keep asking you this. But you don't regret leaving the Jedi for me, do you?" Lea asked.

"Of course not. In fact, more and more everyday, I realize it was the right decision for many reasons. But most of all, it was the right decision because I love you Lea," Obi-Wan replied.

"I love you too Obi-Wan," she replied, as he kissed her passionately.

Deception

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars. It all belongs to George.

AN: Here's chapter 25! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 25: Deception

A week had passed since Obi-Wan and Lea had arrived back on Coruscant. Obi-Wan began his job right away and the jury selection process was already well underway. He had just finished a day of wading through potential jurors. It was easy to see how last time Gunray had gotten off, for many of the jurors he dismissed today thought of the viceroy as a hero and wanted nothing more than to see Naboo suffer for its supposed injustice against Gunray. This trial had him worried though. Cato-Neimodia was already promising retaliation against the Naboo if Gunray was convicted. Naboo had no army and they would likely try to invade. And they would most likely target Padme, for there were rumors that the Neimodians planned a public execution for the former queen on their home planet if they captured her. He arrived home to Padme's apartment, where Lea was waiting for him. He expected her usual smile, upon his arrival, but tonight her face was stricken with fear. Obi-Wan hopped out of the speeder and went to her.

"Lea, what is it?" Obi-Wan asked.

"There was another assassination attempt," Lea replied.

"Is Padme all right?" Obi-Wan asked.

"It wasn't directed at Padme this time. It was Anakin," Lea replied.

"Lea, please tell me that he's all right," Obi-Wan replied.

"He's okay, he was very lucky," she replied.

"What happened exactly?" Obi-Wan asked. Lea took a deep breath and began the tale that had occurred only a few hours ago at the palace in Theed.

Earlier that day--Theed

"Naboo has never supported war of any kind. Why would Tarkin make such a bold move?" Jamilla asked.

"I don't know your majesty, but I did not support or even okay this action. He has gone completely against everything Naboo stands for. I plead with you to reinstate me," Padme said.

"I would love nothing more Padme, but the fact remains, you are still in a lot of danger. Until the Chancellor feels otherwise, you cannot resume your post actively. This trial is causing great concern also," Jamilla said.

"I know. The Neimodians have pledged war on us if Nute Gunray is convicted," Padme said, with a troubled frown.

"The Chancellor promises Clone occupation if war is implemented. I hate the fact that it could come to that, but millions of our people would die without the Clone army if the Federation declared war on us," Jamilla replied.

"Yes. In other words, we are at the Chancellor's mercy. We obey him and our people remain safe," Padme said, fighting back tears.

"I don't like it anymore than you do Padme. But we have to see to the safety of our people. And if supporting the Chancellor one-hundred percent will ensure this, than none of us have any choice in the matter," Jamilla replied.

"He's backed us into a fine corner, hasn't he?" Padme asked, with a sad smile.

"I'm afraid so," she replied, sadness creeping into her voice as well. Suddenly, a loud explosion rocked through the palace. Jamilla's security was immediately surrounding Padme and the Queen.

"What has happened?" Jamilla demanded. The security guards knew nothing. Suddenly, Typho came running into the Throne room.

"Captain, what has happened?" Padme asked.

"It appears that an explosive device was planted in the docking bay," Typho said gravely. Padme's heart nearly stopped and she began running toward the docking bay.

"Anakin!" she called.

"Milady, no! I can't allow you to enter there," Typho replied. Padme broke his grip from her arm and continued running, while calling Anakin's name.

A few moments earlier...

"Artoo, why don't you go over to the other docking bay and see how the repairs on our ship are coming," Anakin told the little droid. Artoo chirped and Anakin smiled.

"Yeah, I'm sure. I don't think we're going to find much in here," as he held a camera with frayed wires. Again, the camera in this docking bay had been cut and he had just discovered it. Anakin decided he would watch the feed in his and Padme's room later, but he suspected that he wouldn't find anything since Panaka was covering his tracks well. But Anakin was curious as to what the captain had been up to earlier and what had he wanted no one to see? Anakin knew that it was likely he would never know. Suddenly, he felt his senses tingling. The Force was warning him of danger. Anakin

carefully scanned the room and felt nothing. He looked down at his hands and felt his senses tingling again. He ripped open the panel on the camera and was astonished to see several tiny explosive devices woven into the wiring of the camera. His eyes widened, and thinking quickly, he hurled the camera away. As he ran for cover, there was a huge explosion. The Force of the explosion threw into the wall and to his luck, he fell behind some storage containers, which protected him from further blasts, as the explosives triggered one after another. The sprinkler systems activated immediately and began putting out any fires that had started.

A few moments later, Anakin attempted to open his eyes. His vision swam and he felt dizzy. His ears were ringing and he felt a wave of nausea sweep him. Through the ringing, he could hear Padme's voice calling to him. Struggling, he pulled himself up on top of one of the storage containers.

"Anakin! Oh Ani!" Padme cried, as she reached him.

"I'm okay angel," he tried to comfort her, but she was already crying.

"Typho, help me get him to the med bay," Padme said. Captain Typho threw one of Anakin's arms over his shoulders. After Anakin steadied himself, they slowly helped him to the med bay.

"Is he okay?" Padme asked the healer, who was finishing his examination.

"He will be fine Senator. He is very lucky. The impact from the wall just caused some bruising. He had some minor cuts and burns that I've already treated with bacta. Is the dizziness subsided?" the healer asked Anakin. Anakin nodded.

"I feel fine now," Anakin insisted.

"How about the nausea and ringing in your ears?" he asked.

"Gone," Anakin replied. The healer nodded.

"Looks like the after effects have already faded. He's going to be fine. I just suggest that you take it easy the rest of the day, but otherwise, you're free to go," the healer said.

"Thank you sir," Anakin replied, as he stood up. Padme continued to fret about him, as they left the med bay.

"Are you sure you feel okay Ani?" she asked. He smiled.

"I feel fine angel," he replied.

"Maybe I should call you mother and tell her we're not coming for lunch. You should probably rest," Padme said.

"No, no, let's go. I'm starving anyway. That has to be a sign of normalness, right?" he asked with a smile. She smiled back.

"I suppose so. But then we're going home and you're not to do anymore exercises or saber training for the rest of the day," she instructed. He smirked wryly.

"Yes my master," he mocked, as he pinched her rear. She gasped and then smirked.

"Oh, you will pay for that one later Skywalker," she replied, with an evil smirk.

"I certainly hope so," he replied, with a cheesy grin. Arm in arm, they walked toward their speeder.

"Oh and I'm driving," she replied. Anakin rolled his eyes and decided not to argue, for he knew it would be pointless.

Obi-Wan looked stunned, as Lea finished the story about the explosives. It was no doubt that they had been intended to kill Anakin. And he knew Panaka was behind it.

"Panaka has to behind this," Obi-Wan replied.

"I agree, but unfortunately, he has an alibi. Apparently yesterday, our captain Panaka was promoted to the Chancellor's personal security. He left Theed early this morning for Coruscant," Lea replied.

"It's obvious he planted it before he left. But it seems that the good Chancellor has ensured that he cannot be accused of it," Obi-Wan said.

"Yes, it certainly was convenient. Our good captain Panaka is now General Panaka," Lea replied.

"General? He jumped several rankings overnight?" Obi-Wan asked suspiciously.

"Yes, the Chancellor seems to think he is deserving after his log years of service," Lea replied.

"Or maybe they just expected the explosives would be successful in killing Anakin," Obi-Wan replied.

"That's what I think too," Lea replied, as she wrapped her arms around Obi-Wan's neck.

"Everything will be all right," Obi-Wan assured her.

"I hope so," she replied, as she kissed him softly.

Panaka entered the Chancellor's office.

"You asked to see me your excellency?" Panaka asked.

"Yes General Panaka, please come in," Palpatine replied. The general entered and the door slid closed behind him. Panaka walked over to the window where Palpatine was standing and stood beside him.

"Your attempt on Skywalker has failed," Palpatine said. Panaka looked surprised.

"But those explosives should have killed him," Panaka insisted.

"You underestimate the boy Panaka. He is very strong in the Force and he sensed the danger. He was able to toss your trap several feet away before it exploded. He made it out with a few cuts and bruises," Palpatine replied.

"What will we do now excellency?" he asked.

"Skywalker has proven that he is a formidable opponent. He took down Jango Fett and Aurra Sing, both whom had killed supposedly better trained Jedi. I will be handing this task to General Grevious. Not even great Jedi masters have been able to walk away from a fight with him," Palpatine said.

"And if Grevious fails?" Panaka asked. Palpatine smiled evilly.

"Then, I will have to turn the task to Dooku or handle him myself. It is of no consequence. One way or another, I will eliminate Skywalker and eventually Kenobi as well. Then Amidala will be easy game for you, as well as Jamilla. The time for my grand Empire comes soon and nothing will stand in my way,"

Padme watched fondly, as Anakin played with their nieces, chasing them around the yard and tickling them. They had gone to Shmi and Cliegg's house for lunch and her parents, Sola and the girls had come as well. She had told him no strenuous activity for the rest of the day, but he insisted that playing with Ryoo and Pooja was fun, not strenuous. She relented, seeing how her nieces loved when their Uncle Ani chased them around.

"He's going to make a wonderful father," Sola mentioned from her seat on the porch next to Padme's. Padme smiled and nodded.

"I know," Padme replied, with a small smile.

"Are you okay Padme?" Sola asked.

"No. I'm so scared I'm going to lose him Sola. They're trying to kill him, because of me," Padme said, as she choked back her sobs. Anakin saw the distraught on Padme's face and looked down at his eyes met Sola's. She smiled at him and rubbed Padme's back.

"I'm going to take the girls in and get them cleaned up. They probably have grass stains all over them. Don't you worry little sister, nothing's going to happen to him or to you," Sola told her, as she called Ryoo and Pooja in. Anakin sat down beside her and pulled her into his arms.

"I'm okay Padme, I'm right here," he assured her. She wiped a few tears away.

"I know. I just don't know what I'd do if I lost you. I couldn't bare it Ani, I couldn't," she cried.

"You're not going to lose me angel," he assured her, as he pushed her curls away from her face. He tilted his head and leaned down, kissing her passionately.

"I love you so much," he whispered, as he broke the kiss and pressed his forehead to hers.

"I love you too," she whispered back, before their lips came crashing together again. They broke the kiss again and he smiled at her.

"Why don't we head home now. I think I'd like to spend the evening curled up with my beautiful wife, just the two of us, alone," he whispered in her ear. She beamed.

"I'd like that. Let's go say goodbye and I'll even let you drive this time," she giggled, as she pinched his rear as he stood up. He looked back at her incredulously.

"One good pinch deserves another, my love," she laughed. He shook his head and pulled her up, before they walked inside to say goodbye.

General Grevious accepted the transmission on the holocom. The holo image of his master, Darth Sidious, appeared before him. He had never seen all of his master's face, for he always wore a dark cowl over his head. But Grevious obeyed his every word. He was the perfect instrument of destruction and he already had several Jedi light sabers as his trophies.

"What is thy bidding my master?" Grevious rasped.

"You will go to Naboo and seek out Anakin Skywalker. Engage in a duel with him and kill the boy. Kenobi will not be able to interfere," Sidious ordered.

"Skywalker will be child's play. Consider him already taken care of," the General replied.

"Do not underestimate him General. He is far more powerful and resourceful than you think. Use whatever means necessary to eliminate him," Sidious ordered. Grevious bowed.

"Yes my master, I will leave at once," Grevious said, as he went to prepare for his departure...

Anakin vs Grevious

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars. It all belongs to George.

AN: Here's chapter 26! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 26: Anakin vs. Grevious

Anakin and Padme had arrived home a while ago. Anakin sat by the holocom in the living area talking to Obi-Wan. He had just received the call and now was receiving several jabs from Obi-Wan on his attire. He had a roaring fire going and the wine all ready. He had drawn a bubble bath for Padme to try and get her to relax a little, before donning just a pair of sleep pants and going to ready the wine. Lea had proceeded to chide Obi-Wan for his teasing, before telling Anakin how glad she was that he was okay and then asking about Padme.

"How is she?" Lea asked.

"Worried. More worried then I think I've ever seen her. Palpatine has her backed into a corner. She has to support him, or he'll offer no military support if Cato-Neimodia declares war," Anakin said, distraught at the whole situation.

"It is likely you will both have to testify against Gunray," Obi-Wan replied.

"Is it even safe for me to bring Padme anywhere near Coruscant?" Anakin asked.

"No, but without Padme's testimony, the jury may not find enough to convict," Obi-Wan replied.

"Not enough to convict? But what about the blockade and all the assassination attempts!" Anakin asked in disbelief.

"Gunray is not on trial for the blockade this time. He has already been tried and found innocent and we cannot try him again for the same crime. That would be double jeopardy. No, he's on trial this time for attempted murder and if Padme doesn't testify, then he will likely go free again," Obi-Wan replied.

"It's a lose, lose situation. If Gunray is convicted, it's likely that they'll declare war on Naboo. If he's not, he'll never stop trying to kill Padme," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan gave him a sympathetic look.

"I'm sorry Anakin, I wish I had better news," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin gave him a half smile.

"You've been great Obi-Wan, I don't know what we'd do without either of you. Just watch out for Panaka, he might be gunning for you too," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan nodded.

"We'll talk to you both sometime tomorrow," Lea said, as the transmission blinked out. Anakin turned, when he heard soft footsteps. Padme descended the stairs in a long, blue silk nightgown and her hair fell around her in chestnut ringlets. He smiled at her.

"You seem a lot more relaxed," he said. She smiled back.

"I am. That bubble bath was exactly what I needed. But I started to miss you, so I decided to come find you. Looks like you've been busy too," she said, as she eyed the fire and the wine. He lifted her hand and kissed it, before leading her to the floor by the fire, where he had blankets and cushions out for them. They sat down by the fire and drank a glass of red wine together. Padme put her glass down and took Anakin's hand in her own.

"I think this is where I told you that I loved you for the very fist time," he said. She smiled.

"Yes, I'll never forget that. It's also where you asked me to marry you too," she replied. He smile back at her.

"Ani, there's something I want to talk about," Padme replied. He gave her a half smile.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I...I know this might not be the best time with everything that's been happening, but I feel like I'm ready. I don't know if it was watching you play with Ryoo and Pooja or what, but I'm ready for that. I want to have a baby Anakin. I didn't get my injection this week yet and I don't think I'm going to if you're ready too," she told him honestly, but a bit timidly. He smiled at her.

"Really, you want to have a baby?" he asked, with a smile. She smiled back and nodded.

"I want that too Padme, more than anything," he caressed her face and smiled at her.

"You're so beautiful. Any baby we have is going to be just as beautiful as you," he told her tenderly. She smiled shyly, as his hands caressed her through her nightgown.

"Well, if we have a little boy, then I hope for his sake that he's handsome like you," Padme replied playfully.

"A little boy would be nice. But so would a beautiful little girl too. Let's have both angel," Anakin replied. Padme giggled.

"That sounds wonderful Ani, but usually babies come one at a time," Padme giggled.

"Well then, we better get busy then my love," he said, gazing at her with that look that always made her melt. She smiled, as she fell back against the cushions and his lips descended on hers...

Obi-Wan Kenobi entered the Chancellor's office.

"Ah, master Kenobi, come in, come in," the Chancellor greeted. Obi-Wan bowed respectfully.

"Hello Chancellor," he replied.

"I understand that jury selection was completed today," Palpatine said.

"Yes your excellency. I'm confident that this group of jurors will try the case fairly," Obi-Wan replied.

"Good, good. Now perhaps Nute Gunray will be put in prison where he belongs. I do regret that Senator Amidala and her husband will likely have to testify. It certainly is not safe here for them," Palpatine said.

"I know Chancellor, but the prosecuting attorney says that it will be almost impossible for the charges to stick if Anakin and Padme do not testify," Obi-Wan replied.

"Well, we'll just have to make sure they are well guarded. I heard about that awful assassination attempt on Anakin yesterday at the palace. It is simply dreadful that someone would want to hurt them," Palpatine said.

"I agree Chancellor. They are like family to me," Obi-Wan replied.

"Yes. Well, thank you for your hard work Obi-Wan. I have a good feeling that justice will be served," Palpatine replied. Obi-Wan nodded and bowed, before leaving.

The next morning, after Obi-Wan had left, Lea called Padme to see how she was doing. The woman that answered the comm call was surprisingly different than the one she had expected. Padme wore a bright smile and had a rosy tint to her cheeks.

"Well, you certainly seem happy this morning," Lea said. Padme giggled.

"Sorry, I didn't talk to you last night. I was really stressed," Padme replied.

"Yes, well you certainly seem fine this morning," Lea replied. Padme giggled again.

"You can thank Ani for that," she replied.

"I think I just might do that. So, do you want all the grizzly news?" Lea asked. Padme sipped at her caf.

"You know I do," she replied.

"Jury selection is complete. The trail is set to begin in two days," Lea said.

"That soon?" Padme asked.

"Yes, the prosecution isn't wasting any time. Obi-Wan seems to think you could be called to testify by the end of the week," Lea replied. Padme nodded.

"Well, I suppose Ani and I should make arrangements to return in a couple days then," Padme replied. Lea nodded.

"I better go get cleaned up for my daily meeting with Tarkin," Padme said, as she finished her caf.

"I'll talk to you soon Padme, take care," Lea said.

"You too Lea," Padme replied, as the transmission blinked out.

Later that day, Padme gazed out into the meadow fondly, as she watched Anakin meditate. It wasn't something he particularly cared for doing, but he had promised Obi-Wan that he would. She checked

her chrono and realized that it was time for her meeting with Bail and Mon Mothma. She left the veranda and went back inside. Upon entering the sitting room, she screamed in terror...

Anakin's head shot up, as Padme horrified scream broke his concentration. He couldn't sense any danger at all in the Force, but that didn't stop him from using his abilities to carry him into the air and over the veranda. He ran inside once his feet were on the ground and stopped dead in his tracks. He now knew why he didn't sense anything, because the thing holding his beloved unconscious wife was a machine.

"Who are you!" Anakin demanded.

"They call me General Grevious. You must be Anakin Skywalker. I've been sent to dispose of you and your wife," Grevious rasped.

"Let her go then and deal with me first!" Anakin demanded.

"Not so fast boy. If you want you precious wife back, then you'll stay where you are," Grevious said, as he threw Padme's unconscious form over his metal shoulder. He drew a light saber, making sure Anakin didn't move. The mechanical monster leapt over the veranda and began running for the beach with Padme in tow. Anakin wasted no time and followed after him.

Grevious scanned the beach for transportation and spotted a nearby tour yacht full of people.

"Perfect. Plenty of hostages!" Grevious said, as he boarded the ship. The occupants on the ship began to scream, as Grevious tore his way aboard, carrying an unconscious woman over his shoulder. He made his way to the frightened captain of the yacht.

"Get moving!" Grevious ordered, as he ignited his saber. The frightened man obeyed and fired up the engines.

Anakin watched, as the yacht began to leave the dock. Reaching deeply into the Force, he jumped as far as he could and landed on the retreating ship, again startling many of the passengers. Grevious looked back in surprise.

"Well, you certainly are persistent," Grevious said, as he tossed Padme to the side like a rag doll. Anakin looked at her worriedly, but the Force was telling him that she was all right. Anakin ignited his saber and circled Grevious, causing the people to back away as far as they could. Grevious' two arms separated into two more, making a total of four. He drew four light sabers and ignited them all at once. Anakin's eyes widened, as the general began to spin the sabers violently. Anakin brought his saber up to block, as Grevious brought all four sabers down on his at once. Anakin held out strongly and pushed him back up. Meanwhile, Padme began to stir and slowly woke up. Her first images were her beloved Anakin fighting the monstrosity that had invaded their home.

"Senator Amidala, are you all right?" a woman asked, as she and a man helped her up. Padme took a deep breath and nodded.

"Yes, thank you," Padme replied, unable to tear her eyes away from her husband. Anakin was successful in disarming the General of two of his sabers, but Grevious still came at him furiously. He backed Anakin dangerously close to the back of the ship. Anakin felt himself begin to fall, as Grevious continued to swipe at him.

"Ani!" Padme screamed. Anakin caught himself with the Force and used it to bring himself back from the edge. He clashed sabers again with Grevious, and tried kicking the general in his center. But Anakin's foot painfully met metal and he cried out in pain. The general chuckled and punched Anakin the gut. Anakin yelped in pain and the general swiped him across the face. A piece of metal caught Anakin near his right eye, reopening the old wound that Jango had given him. That scar had barely been visible, but this time it probably would leave a deeper scar. Grevious swept Anakin's feet out from under him and he landed hard on his back. Anakin saw something peculiar glowing from behind the general's chest plate. Thinking

quickly, he reached up, trying to pry open the chest plate. Inside, Anakin could see an organ of some sort, like a beating heart. Grevious growled, and hit Anakin across the face again, knocking him away and onto his stomach. Anakin saber fell out of his hand and deactivated. The General picked up the saber.

"Another light saber for my collection," Grevious said, as he ignited the saber, preparing to skewer Anakin with it.

"Anakin!" Padme screamed.

"Don't worry Senator, you'll soon join your husband," Grevious rasped. Lying on the deck nearby, Anakin spotted a blaster. Using the Force, Anakin called the blaster to his hand. Just as Grevious prepared to bring the saber down, Anakin leapt up and fired the blaster right at the living organ inside the General. Anakin spent several blaster bolts, causing the general to catch fire and explode. Anakin breathed a sigh of relief and the people on the ship applauded in relief and thanks for having been saved. Anakin called his saber back to his hand and clipped it to his belt.

"You shouldn't take things that don't belong to you," Anakin told the dead general. Padme leapt into his arms and kissed him passionately, not caring about the spectators around them. Anakin smiled down at her and held her close, as the captain of the yacht reversed their course and returned them to Varykino. Anakin and Padme sighed, as they spotted a holo reporter taking film of them. It seemed that there had been one on the yacht that captured the whole thing. The reporter had obviously been visiting Varykino in hopes of capturing a glimpse of the Senator and her husband in hiding. The reporter had no idea that she would be capturing the biggest scoop of the week...

Grevious is dead and Palpatine grows angrier. Padme testifies against Gunray and Neimodian war ships head for Naboo...

Silent Departure

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here, because it's fun.

AN: Here's chapter 27! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 27: Silent Departure

Anakin hissed in pain, as Padme cleaned the blood off his face with a bacta cloth. They were still on the yacht headed back to Varykino, as Grevious had managed to get them out pretty far.

"Are you sure you're not hurt anywhere?" Anakin asked.

"Just a bump on the head, nothing serious," she replied. He winced and squeezed his eye shut, as she pressed on the open cut by his right eye. The bacta solution had successfully stopped the bleeding and Padme discarded the cloth. They arrived back at the Varykino docks a few moments later. Anakin and Padme were let off, while the yacht headed back to Theed carrying the other passengers. As they arrived home, they could see the Holonet reporters swarming around the property as close as they could get. Fortunately, the tight security was keeping them at bay.

Lea hummed to herself, as she dried off after a relaxing bubble bath. Obi-Wan had come home earlier and after dinner, they had both fell into a passionate bout of lovemaking. She smiled, as she remembered it had all started while he was trying to meditate. She had purposely interrupted him and they had ended up on the sofa somehow. Obi-Wan was now meditating again, while she had opted for a bubble bath. She giggled, as she thought about their earlier antics.

Lea smiled at the memory, as she donned her robe again and went out into the living area. Obi-Wan was out on the veranda, meditating...or trying to anyway. She turned on the holonet to catch up on the news and the images that bombarded her vision caused to her to cry out. Lea listened to the holonet reporter speak.

"Earlier today, General Grevious hijacked a tour yacht on Naboo. It appeared when he arrived on the ship, he had an unconscious Senator Padme Amidala over his shoulder. Arriving only moments later, was Anakin Skywalker, the Senator's husband. He proceeded to fight the general in a light saber duel," the reporter explained.

"Obi-Wan!" Lea cried frantically. Obi-Wan rushed to her side.

"Lea, what is it?" he asked, wrapping his arms around her. She pointed to the holoscreen and Obi-Wan's eyes widened, as he watched Anakin fight General Grevious. When Anakin shot the general in his venerable spot and Grevious burst into flames, Obi-Wan and Lea sighed in relief.

"It seems that the galaxy owes Anakin Skywalker their gratitude for ridding us of Grevious. Grevious has previously alluded the Jedi and slain several, including the most experienced Jedi masters. There's no word yet on how the Jedi council is taking this obvious embarrassment to the order. The Senator, nor her husband would comment and they were quickly whisked back to their home after the battle," the reporter explained.

"They sent Grevious after them. This is getting serious," Obi-Wan replied.

"What should we do?" Lea asked.

"Well, Padme has to come back to Coruscant anyway to testify," Obi-Wan replied.

"Do you think that's safe?" Lea asked.

"Actually, it might be safer than Naboo right now. It is obvious that the Sith want Anakin dead and Padme as well. While we're on Coruscant and they're on Naboo, he's got to take on whatever they throw at him alone. And if he took out Grevious, then it is likely Dooku may go after him. He's not ready to take on Dooku. I wouldn't fare well against him by myself either, as Dooku even defeated Master Windu," Obi-Wan replied.

"Then we need to get them off Naboo now," Lea replied. Obi-Wan nodded, as she opened up a channel with Padme's comm system in Varykino.

When Anakin and Padme came into view over the holo screen, Lea sighed in relief.

"We just saw the holonews. Are you both all right?" Lea asked.

"We're fine Lea, thanks to Ani," Padme said, as she held his hand tightly.

"Varykino has been exposed by this whole ordeal. It's no longer safe there anymore. I want you both to return to Coruscant," Obi-Wan said. Padme nodded.

"We can leave in the morning," Padme replied.

"No, I want you to leave tonight, as soon as possible. No one would be expecting it," Obi-Wan replied.

"You think that someone else could come after us tonight?" Anakin asked.

"You defeated Grevious, the leader of the droid army. I have a hunch that Dooku may come after you himself. Dooku is extremely powerful Anakin. I'm talking almost equal in strength to master Yoda, though not quite. You cannot take him on alone," Obi-Wan said. Anakin nodded in complete agreement.

"I'll go start packing," Padme said, as she kissed Anakin cheek and left.

"We'll see you in a few hours. Get off Naboo as quickly as possible," Obi-Wan stressed again. Anakin nodded, as he began to turn away.

"And Anakin," Obi-Wan called. Anakin turned back, only to see Obi-Wan give him a small smile.

"I'm very proud of you," Obi-Wan said. Anakin smiled back.

"Thank you Obi-Wan, that means a lot to me. I wouldn't have been able to defeat him without your training though, so thank you," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan smiled and nodded, as the transmission blinked out.

An hour later, Anakin and Padme were aboard their cruiser. Anakin fired up the engines and took off. Once they were clear of the atmosphere, he put in the calculations and jumped them to hyperspace. Once they were safely secured in hyperspace, he went back into the cabin where Padme was waiting for him. Anakin went to her, seeing how worried she was. He pulled her into his arms and held her close.

"Why can't they leave us alone, Ani?" she cried.

"I don't know angel, but I'm going to be ready for them. We've made it this far, we're going to make it all the way. Obi-Wan and I will find this Sith Lord and we will defeat him. We'll pay him back for all the pain he's caused," Anakin said, as he wiped her tears away.

"I don't want you to face him, but I know if you don't, we'll never have peace," Padme replied.

"We'll beat him Padme and we'll restore peace to the galaxy. Then, you and I will raise beautiful babies and grow old together," Anakin replied, as he smiled down at her. She smiled back.

"Speaking of babies, I think we should get busy on that," Padme replied, with a giggle. Anakin lifted her into his arms and kissed her. As their lips moved passionately over one another's, Anakin carried her to their bedroom aboard their ship...

The tall figure in the darkness searched the empty house thoroughly. It was clear that they had gone, but not long ago. Disappointed that they had possibly suspected more trouble, he left the lake country and headed back to his ship. Once there, he place a call on the holocom. The image of Darth Sidious appeared a few moments later.

"What do you have to report, Lord Tyrannus?" Sidious asked.

"They were not in their home master. Nor do I sense the boy anywhere on Naboo for that matter," Dooku replied.

"Kenobi must have warned them to leave Naboo. It is of no consequence though. I am positive they are coming to Coruscant for the trial," Sidious said.

"What are your orders, my master?" Dooku asked.

"You will remain on Naboo and bide your time. Everything will work to our advantage soon. I have foreseen it. I will keep in contact and give you more instructions later. Do not fail me, Lord Tyrannus," Sidious said.

"Yes my master," Dooku said, as the transmission blinked out.

Three days later, the Nute Gunray's trial was set to begin. Obi-Wan sat at his designated place near the Judge's bench. As part of his job, Obi-Wan was to make sure all witnesses told the truth. If he sensed that they were lying, it was his job to take over the interrogation and draw the truth out. He looked up, seeing both Master Windu and Master Yoda sit down on the prosecution side. Lea entered next, and sat near the front. Padme entered behind her,

clutching Anakin's arm tightly. They found their seat in the same row as Lea. Next, two prison wards entered, escorting Nute Gunray and Rune Haako, whom both were shackled by stun cuffs. Gunray's eyes locked on Padme, intense hatred flashing in them. Anakin returned the Neimodian's glare, daring him to make some kind of foolish move against her. Many Neimodians were present at the trial, and he could feel their eyes on Padme and their intense hatred of her. Suddenly, a young Neimodian shot up out of his seat and pulled out a blaster that he had concealed.

"If our viceroy goes to jail, our people will starve!" the young alien screamed, as he pointed his blaster at Padme. Screams of panic erupted in the court room. But Anakin used to the Force to pluck the blaster from the man's hands, while shielding Padme behind him. Master Windu ignited his saber and escorted the man out. Anakin could feel his wife trembling against him and he saw that her knuckles were white as she clutched his tunic in her hands. He took her in his arms and helped her sit back down. The judge slammed the gavel down, calling the courtroom to order.

"There will be no more outbursts and this trial will proceed! Prosecution, you may call your first witness," the judge said.

"The prosecution calls our key witness, Senator Padme Amidala Skywalker to the stand," the attorney said. Anakin took her hand and led her to the witness block. She sat down and Anakin stood off to the side, watching carefully and opening his senses to the Force. Nute Gunray glared at her, hatred marring his features. But Padme resolved herself, ready to answer any questions thrown at her...

The Trial

Disclaimer: It's not mine. It's George's. You all know that.

AN: Here's chapter 28! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 28: The Trial

The prosecuting attorney approached the bench where Padme sat.

"Senator, please tell me why you believe that it is Viceroy Gunray that has been responsible for the attacks on your life?

"Because he has admitted it himself. The viceroy holds a terrible grudge against me," Padme replied.

"Tell us why?" the prosecutor asked.

"His grudge dates back over ten years ago when I still Queen of Naboo and I foiled his attempt to enslave my planet," Padme replied.

"Objection! The blockade has no bearing on this case!" the Neimodian defense attorney argued.

"Sustained," the judge ordered.

"Has the viceroy been the one hiring these assassins?" the prosecutor asked.

"Yes. First, he hired Jango Fett and then Aurra Sing. Most recently, it was General Grevious, whom I strongly believe the viceroy has a connection to," Padme replied.

"Objection! Pure speculation!" the defense attorney argued.

"Senator Amidala, you will only answer the questions and you will not make assumptions against the accused," the judge ordered.

"Yes your honor," Padme replied.

"Senator, tell me how these attempts on your life have affected you?" the prosecutor asked.

"They have forced me to take an extended leave from my duties as a Senator and they have forced my husband and I into hiding repeatedly. My own home planet is no longer safe for us, because of him," Padme replied calmly. The prosecutor continued with his questioning for a while, before he no longer had anymore.

"Thank you Senator, no further questions," the prosecutor said. Padme stiffened, as the Neimodian attorney stood up. It was time for the cross-examination.

"Senator, is it true that you have many enemies in the Senate?" the defense attorney asked.

"If by enemies you mean, those which do not share my political views, then yes," Padme replied. The attorney glanced at the judge.

"A simple yes or no Senator," the judge ordered.

"Yes," Padme answered.

"Tell me Senator, how are you so convinced that these assassins were hired by my client?" the Neimodian asked.

"He admitted it himself! And he was aboard the Republic cruiser on which my husband and I were ambushed on by Aurra Sing. Several Republic officers witnessed his dealings," Padme insisted.

"Funny, none of those officers are available to testify though isn't it," the attorney replied smugly.

"Objection! The defense is harassing the witness!" the prosecuting attorney argued.

"Sustained. Get on with your questioning," the judge ordered. The Neimodian nodded.

"Tell me Senator, who was it that stopped all the assassins from carrying out their mission to kill you?" the attorney asked.

"By my husband, Anakin Skywalker," Padme answered proudly.

"So your husband is kind of like your own personal hit man," the Neimodian sneered. Padme's jaw dropped in abject horror, while the court room erupted in whispers.

"Objection!" the prosecutor screamed.

"Withdrawn, no further questions," the Neimodian sneered at Padme.

"The witness may step down. The court will take a recess and reconvene in one hour," the judge ordered. Padme clutched Anakin's arm, as he escorted her out, making sure he was between her and the defense side of the court room.

An hour later, the court reconvened and Anakin was called to the stand. His questions were along the same lines of Padme's, as the prosecutor wanted to use him to back up Padme's story. The defense treated him the same as they had Padme, with jeering questions and indications that they were the ones with the grudge against the viceroy. After that, the judge dismissed for the day and Obi-Wan took them all to Dex's to blow off some steam.

"Obi-Wan!" Dex called.

"Hello Dex," Obi-Wan replied, as he hugged his old friend.

"My, my, and who might this be?" Dex asked.

"Dex, this is Lea," Obi-Wan replied.

"So this is the lovely lady that saved you from that stuffy old order," Dex joked.

"It's nice to meet you Dex," Lea replied.

"Likewise, milady. And this must be the lovely Senator Amidala herself," Dex said, as he shook her hand.

"Hello Dex, it's nice to meet you," Padme replied. He nodded. Anakin was about to introduce himself, but Dex interrupted him.

"There's no need, I know who you are. You're the boy that got rid of that nasty General Grevious," Dex said, as he shook Anakin hand. Anakin smiled.

"It's good to meet you Dex," Anakin replied.

"Come, come, sit down and I'll be right with you," Dex said. They found a seat and Anakin noticed Padme's distraught face. After they put in their order, Anakin put his arm around her shoulders.

"Padme, are you okay?" Anakin asked. She smiled at him.

"I'm fine Ani, I'm just glad that I'm done on the stand," Padme replied. Anakin nodded.

"So, how long do you think the trail will take?" Anakin asked Obi-Wan.

"Well, there's no evidence really. Only testimony. The two of you were the key witnesses, and I imagine now the defense will try to call character witnesses to try and convince the jury that Gunray is a good man. Then I imagine, that the jury will go to make their decision," Obi-Wan replied.

"Did you get a good feeling from them?" Anakin asked, curiously. Obi-Wan's eyes danced with laughter.

"I can't tell you that Anakin, no matter how much I want to," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin grinned and shrugged.

"It was worth a shot," Anakin replied. The four of them finished their meal and then went home.

A few weeks passed by, until finally both the prosecution and the defense made their closing arguments and the jury was dismissed for deliberation. The jury deliberated and actually reached a unanimous decision, which they were set to reveal in court the next morning.

Mas Amedda entered Chancellor Palpatine's office later that evening.

"What do you have to report?" Palpatine asked.

"The jury has been dismissed for deliberation. I am afraid that they may be sympathetic to Amidala and her husband, simply due to her reputation in the Senate and his status as a hero for eliminating Grevious and the assassins," Amedda replied.

"Thank you Amedda, you may go," Palpatine replied. Amedda bowed and left as he was told. Palpatine pulled his cowl over his head and turned his holocom on. An image of a pale, bald woman came into his view.

"What is thy bidding my master," the ugly woman asked in a scratchy voice.

"Your mission is kill all 12 jurors tonight. None of them must live and you must do it tonight and discreet as possible," Sidious ordered.

"It will be done master," the woman replied.

"Do not fail me...Ventress," Sidious said, as the transmission blinked out.

Do not fail me...Ventress...

Anakin woke up with a start, confused by the words he had heard through the Force. Or was it a dream? The voice had sounded deep and menacing, like evil itself. And who was this Ventress?–Anakin didn't know what to think. Carefully, he lifted Padme off his chest and laid her gently on his pillow. He kissed her cheek and padded out to the veranda in his sleep pants. A while later, Anakin heard sensed Obi-Wan behind him.

"I'm sorry, did I wake you when I got up?" Anakin asked.

"Well no, not exactly. But master Yoda can probably sense your distress all the way from the Temple considering how loudly you're projecting," Obi-Wan replied, with a small smile.

"I'm sorry, I just sensed something a while ago," Anakin said. Obi-Wan nodded, waiting for him to continue.

"It was a dark tremor in the Force. I heard a voice, it was deep and I could tell it was evil," Anakin said.

"What did they say?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Do not fail me...Ventress," Anakin repeated. Obi-Wan was perplexed as well.

"Do you think this Ventress could be a person?" Anakin asked. Obi-Wan nodded.

"It is very possible, but I've never heard of a person called Ventress," Obi-Wan replied.

"I suppose there's nothing we can do really. Something just doesn't feel right," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan patted Anakin shoulder.

"I know Anakin. But we have a big day tomorrow, so you should try and get some sleep," Obi-Wan nodded. Anakin nodded, and the two of them retreated back to their rooms.

The next morning, court convened and the judge took her place. They waited and waited for the jury members to enter. Finally, after twenty minutes had passed, the judge retreated to her chambers to take an emergency call. Anakin's eyes met Obi-Wan's from across the room. Both men knew something was very wrong and neither could ignore the smug look on Nute Gunray's face. About ten minutes later, the human, female judge exited her chambers and returned to her bench. She looked pale and shocked to the core. She slammed her gavel down to quiet the court room.

"It seems that I've just been informed that all twelve jurors have been found dead in their homes," the judge said. Padme's hand went over her mouth in horror. The judge slammed the gavel down several times to quiet the room again.

"It appears that they were each killed by a single light saber strike to the heart. I'm afraid that under these circumstances, I've been informed that I have no choice but...to declare a mistrial," the judge said. Reaction was mixed, as half the court room was happy and the other half was angry. Padme sat in her seat, shell shocked. Nute Gunray was plenty smug, as he walked out of the court room, a free man. Padme just sat there, staring straight ahead. Anakin wrapped his arms around her.

"Angel?" he asked. She turned her head to look in his eyes and he suddenly felt helpless, as she looked like she was lost. Anakin realized that she was ready to breakdown, but she wouldn't give anyone but him the satisfaction of seeing her cry. So, he helped her up and led her out of the courtroom. On the ride home, everyone toss worried glances at Padme, for she hadn't said a word or shed a

tear. Obi-Wan parked the speeder and Anakin hopped out, but Padme just sat there. Anakin looked really concerned now and lifted her into his arms, carrying her inside to their bedroom.

"I'm worried Obi-Wan. I've never seen her so distraught. How could they let that monster go!" Lea yelled, tears welling in her eyes as well. Obi-Wan pulled her into his arms and comforted her, as she cried.

"Don't worry Lea, Anakin will take care of her," Obi-Wan comforted.

Anakin sat her down on the bed and sat beside her.

"Angel, we're alone now. Please talk to me," Anakin urged. Tears fell down her cheeks, as she clung to Anakin.

"He's...he's going to hunt us for...the rest of our lives," Padme sobbed, as she fell into his arms. Anakin scooped her up and began rocking her, as she cried against his chest.

"He won't get to you, unless it's over my dead body. I won't let him hurt you and I'll take him out myself if I have to," Anakin told her.

"But...but that's what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid that you're...going to get hurt...because of me," she sobbed.

"It'll never be because of you angel. I'd die if anything ever happened to you and I won't let it," Anakin told her. Padme stood up and wiped her tears away.

"I know...I was just hoping...that justice would be served this time," Padme replied. Anakin put his hands on her shoulders and noticed she was trembling.

"Angel, what is it? You're trembling," Anakin asked. She turned in his embrace and looked into those deep blue eyes that she loved to get lost in.

"Ani, I saw a healer yesterday," Padme began. Anakin's eyes widened and he glanced down at her tummy and then up at her again.

"Are you..." he started. She nodded.

"We're pregnant Ani," she replied. Anakin broke out into a huge smile.

"That's wonderful Padme!" he exclaimed, as he spun her around.

"I know...I was waiting to tell you until tonight. I thought we'd be celebrating a guilty verdict and I was going to tell you then," she sniffed.

"I'm so happy that I'm pregnant, but now...I worry about what kind of world we're bringing our child into. If...if something ever happened to our baby...because of me, I'd never forgive myself," Padme sobbed. Anakin pulled her into a tight hug.

"I'm never going to let anything happen to you or our baby, I promise. This is happy moment, we're going to be parents," Anakin said, as he hugged her again.

"How far along?" Anakin asked. Padme beamed genuinely.

"Three weeks," she replied.

"I know that we all hoped for a different verdict today and I'm not going to lie, because I am very worried that the jurors were murdered, but I still think we have a lot to celebrate," Anakin replied. Padme smiled.

"You're right, we do," she replied, as she gave him a tender kiss.

"Well, let's go tell Obi-Wan and Lea our news. Then, we'll have a nice dinner and then we'll come back in here and celebrate alone," he told her with a roguish smile. She giggled and kissed him passionately.

"Sounds wonderful, my love," she replied, as they left their bedroom together.

Lea stared at the young couple across the table with a perplexed look. Only an hour ago, Padme was shocked to the core by what had happened in the court room. But now, she and Anakin would glance at each other, exchanging soft smiles and tender gazes, as they ate. Not that this was anything unusual for these two. She had gotten used to the way they usually clung to each other and the way neither's eyes could stray from each other for very long. But tonight, it seemed like they were sharing some kind of secret. And she wanted to know what it was, even though Obi-Wan would shoot her chiding looks. She knew she was a busy body, as she and Sola had always taken immense joy in prying into Padme's life, especially her love life. And she couldn't stand it any longer.

"Okay you two, what's going on?" Lea asked. Anakin and Padme glanced at each other, as Dorme, who was eating with them, brought in some shurra for desert.

"Yes milady, after everything that's happened today, we are very glad to see you smile," Dorme replied. Padme took a deep breath and clutched Anakin's hand in her own.

"Anakin and I are going to have a baby," Padme announced. Lea gasped and in her excitement, she jumped out of her seat to hug them both.

"Oh, this is so wonderful! How far along are you?" Lea asked.

"Three weeks," Padme replied, as Dorme hugged she and Anakin too.

"Congratulations to both of you," Dorme replied. Obi-Wan just sat across the table with an amused smirk on his face.

"Oh, I need to go get Aunt Jobal and Sola on the holocom. And then your mother Anakin. They'll all be so excited about the baby," Lea exclaimed excitedly.

"Babies," Obi-Wan said. Lea, Anakin, and Padme all looked at him in astonishment.

"Concentrate, and you'll sense it too Anakin," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin placed his hand on Padme's tummy and closed his eyes. A few seconds later, he opened them, and a big grin encompassed his face.

"He's right, there's two!" Anakin exclaimed.

"Twins?" Padme asked in amazement.

"Yes, we're having twins, angel!" he told her, with a bright smile. Padme smiled back and hugged him tightly. Lea smiled at them, but then looked suspiciously at Obi-Wan.

"Wait, how long have you sensed that she was pregnant?" Lea asked. Obi-Wan shrugged. He so loved getting a rise out of her sometimes.

"Since yesterday. She was glowing when she came home and it was a little hard to miss. In fact, I'm sureAnakin would have picked up on it to if it hadn't of been for the trial and everything," Obi-Wan replied.

"And you were planning on telling me...when?" she asked.

"It wasn't my secret to tell, love," Obi-Wan replied. Lea smacked his arm playfully, as she went to ready the holocom.

"Padme, oh we were so worried about you! We heard about the mistrial. Are you all right?" Jobal asked.

"I'm fine mother," Padme replied.

"Those jurors were all murdered, we're all so worried about you both," Jobal fretted.

"Don't worry mom, Obi-Wan and I'll be investigating those murders ourselves. And I won't let anything happen to her," Anakin told his mother-in-law with a smile. Jobal smiled back.

"I know you won't son," she replied.

"Mom, Ani and I have something to tell all of you," Padme said, as her family gathered around the holocom.

"What is it honey?" she asked.

"I'm pregnant mom," Padme replied. Cheers of joy erupted in the Naberrie house and Anakin chuckled.

"With twins," he added. The Naberrie's stopped celebrating to look at him in shock. Padme nodded and their cheers erupted again. After they talked to her parents for a while, they ended the call and placed on to the Lars home next. The Lars family reaction was the same as the Naberrie's. Shmi was absolutely ecstatic when she found out that Padme was pregnant and when Anakin told her it was twins, he thought that she might faint. Anakin chuckled at his mother's antics, long after the transmission with her had ended. He spotted Obi-Wan out on the veranda and decided that it was a good time to talk to him, seeing that Padme was busy reading a book curled up on the sofa.

"So where do we start investigating?" Anakin asked.

"First, we are going to the Temple in the morning to tell them about what you heard last night. I definitely think that whoever this Ventress is has a connection to the murders and the Sith Lord," Obi-Wan replied.

"I agree Obi-Wan, but do you really think the Council is going to listen to us?" Anakin asked.

"Perhaps not, but we still need to make them aware. Then we will start our investigation," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin nodded and went back inside. He smiled, as he saw that his angel had fallen asleep. He put her book away and lifted her into his arms, carrying her to bed. He removed her robe, leaving her in her nightgown. He undressed himself and climbed in next to her, spooning her against him. He brushed her curls aside and kissed her cheek softly, before snuggling under the sheets with her and falling asleep with her wrapped in his arms...

Dark Plot

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here, because it's fun!

AN: Here's chapter 29! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 29: Dark Plot

Anakin and Obi-Wan were up early the next morning. They arrived at the Temple and were admitted to the council room, as that morning's meeting began. Anakin looked around, trying to put the names to the faces of the Council members. Currently present in person were Yoda, Mace Windu, Shaak Ti, Pablo Jill, Ki-Adi-Mundi, Adi Gallia and Kit Fisto. Those were the only ones Anakin recognized, as the others were communicating by holocom and Anakin had never seen them in his time on Coruscant.

"You have both asked to be allowed to come before us, because you believe you know something we should know about. You have the floor," Mace said. Obi-Wan nodded.

"Anakin, tell them about your vision," Obi-Wan nudged.

"A vision you have had young Skywalker?" Yoda asked.

"Yes master Yoda. The night before the verdict was supposed to be read," Anakin replied.

"What did you see in this vision?" Shaak Ti asked, with much interest.

"I didn't really see anything master Ti, I only heard a voice. I could tell the person was evil though, I could feel it. They said quote "Do not fail me, Ventress," Anakin stated.

"That's it?" Mace asked.

"Yes master Windu," Anakin replied.

"Anakin and I believe that this Ventress is responsible for the murders of the twelve jurors. And we also think that it was the Sith Lord speaking," Obi-Wan replied.

"Do you have proof?" Pablo Jill asked.

"No master Jill, but we believe that it was a warning from the Force hoping to lead us in the right direction," Obi-Wan replied.

"So you have nothing but this little bit of information. A small vision like that hardly warrants an investigation," Mace replied.

"I know what I heard. It was the Sith Lord, I felt the dark tremor. It was close...on Coruscant. The Sith Lord is on Coruscant," Anakin insisted. Some of the council members shared skeptical glances.

"Anakin, the Sith Lord would never be so foolish as to hide himself right here on Coruscant. We would have surely sensed him, don't you think?" Mace replied.

"No, I don't. I think he's gotten so good at hiding that he's able to mask himself from you," Anakin replied truthfully.

"But he can't mask himself from you? A boy that has barely any training," Pablo Jill retorted.

"A boy that has a midichlorian count of nearly twenty-seven thousand, mind you. If Anakin is the chosen one, like I and my old master believe, then it makes perfect sense that the Force would choose to impart such information to him," Obi-Wan replied. Mace Windu and some of the other masters couldn't help but scoff.

"We must be open minded. Perhaps Anakin is correct. Perhaps the Sith Lord is right under our noses, as we would never have suspected it," Shaak Ti reasoned.

"Please Shaak, you aren't going to believe this emotional boy? Everyone in this room can clearly sense what an emotional storm he is. He wears his feelings and emotions on his sleeve," Adi replied.

"Adi, I don't think that is fair," Shaak replied. Pablo Jill stepped in.

"No? The boy is here trying to get some sort of investigation started into what could very well lead to a dead end. And all because his strong attachment to his wife is leading his emotions," Jill reasoned.

"Might I remind you Master Gallia that this emotional boy is responsible for ridding this galaxy of scum like Grevious, Sing, and Fett. His instincts are well placed and the Force has led him well. Why are you so quick to dismiss us? Could it be, that you do not want to admit that the Sith Lord might be right in front of us? I can see where that might be quite embarrassing," Obi-Wan said.

"You are out of line Obi-Wan. You're just like him! You threw away all your training for attachment as well. I think your opinion hardly qualifies as valid," Jill spat.

"Enough!" Yoda called, pounding his gimmer stick on the floor.

"Argue anymore, we will not. Valid young Anakin's vision may be," Yoda said.

"Possibly, but without physical evidence, an investigation cannot be warranted by this council or the Senate," Mace replied.

"Investigate the Jedi will not. Obi-Wan, you and Anakin will. Report your findings to me, you will," Yoda said. Obi-Wan nodded and motioned for Anakin to follow him out of the council room.

"That didn't go well. Most of them wouldn't even listen to us," Anakin said.

"Yes, well, we expected that," Obi-Wan replied.

"I know. They're so blind Obi-Wan!" Anakin ranted, as they got into their speeder.

"Then we will just have to open their eyes," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin nodded, as they left to go back home.

Padme rubbed her stomach thoughtfully. She hadn't started to show yet, but she would soon, especially carrying twins. She had been a little sick in the mornings, but after that she was fine for the most part. She smiled, as she saw Obi-Wan speeder land on the veranda.

"Lea, they're back!" Padme called. Anakin stepped inside and Padme wrapped her arms around his waist.

"How did it go?" she asked. Anakin's frown told her all.

"That bad?" she asked. He nodded.

"They won't help us investigate. But Obi-Wan and I will do that ourselves. They're so blind Padme. They don't want to believe that there could be a Sith right in front of them," Anakin said.

"No they don't, but like I told Anakin, we will find this Sith Lord and open everyone's eyes," Obi-Wan said, as he stood with his arms around Lea. Anakin smiled and nodded.

"How are you feeling?" Anakin asked. Padme smiled at his tenderness.

"I feel just fine my love. Though, I am craving chocolate covered shuura," she said, biting her bottom lip playfully. He smiled and kissed her softly.

"Say no more angel. I'll run to the market on our way home from the Senate building tonight," Anakin replied.

"Thank you sweetheart. But...hurry home tonight, because I'm craving you too," she gave him a sultry gaze and his body went hot with desire. He forced himself to pull away and gave her a sexy half smile. He kissed her quickly, before following Obi-Wan to the speeder.

"Oh Ani, don't forget the whipped cream and extra chocolate sauce," Padme called.

"Yes angel," he called.

Once at the Senate building, Anakin and Obi-wan split up. Obi-Wan went about like it was a normal day, stopping to some people here and there, all while probing the Force. As he opened himself completely to it, he could indeed sense a subtle darkness. But what amazed him was the fact that while subtle, the darkness was strong. Anakin was right to believe that the Sith Lord was indeed on Coruscant. But right here in the Senate building? The very thought made him shudder. How had the council not sensed this? Obi-Wan wondered in horror. The lives of billions of people could be at stake, yet they could not see the danger. While Obi-Wan went about his business, Anakin snuck around the building, using stealth and the Force to mask his presence. He looked around to make sure no one was looking and went to the entrance of Tarkin's office. He opened the panel and overrode the access code. The door slid open and Anakin slipped into the vacant office. He really didn't know what he was looking for, but he rummaged through the various datachips on Tarkin's desk, but found nothing of interest until he came across an unmarked one. He placed it in the small holo imager. An image of what looked like a design for some sort of space station came up. Anakin didn't know why it seemed important, but he would remember to mention it to Obi-Wan. Unable to find anything else, Anakin quietly slipped out.

As the Senate session ended for the day, so did Anakin and Obi-Wan's investigating. They left for the day and Anakin told Obi-Wan about the interesting plans he had found in Tarkin's office. After a

quick stop at the market, Anakin and Obi-Wan were on their way back home. Obi-Wan chuckled, as he saw Anakin set the sack in the backseat.

"What?" Anakin asked.

"She's only a month along and she already has you running out to get her whatever she desires. You're in a lot of trouble," Obi-Wan laughed.

"I'll remember that for when you're in my position," Anakin replied. Obi-Wan frowned thoughtfully.

"Don't you and Lea plan to have children someday?" Anakin asked. Truthfully, Obi-Wan had never thought about it up until very recently. As a Jedi, it hadn't even been a possibility, but now that it was, perhaps he and Lea needed to talk.

"Truthfully, I hadn't really thought about it," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin nodded, as they started home.

Later that evening, after a relaxing bubble bath together, Anakin and Padme laid on their bed clad only in their robes. Anakin fed Padme another piece of chocolate covered shuura topped with whip cream. She giggled, as he kissed and licked the cream from her lips.

"You're so beautiful," he said in a husky whisper, as his lips moved to her neck.

"You're sweet, but I won't be so beautiful in a few months," Padme replied, as she patted her stomach, which would soon begin to swell with their children.

"You'll always be beautiful. And I'll never stop desiring you," Anakin said, as he kissed her softly at first. Their kisses quickly grew more intense, as the fires of passion consumed them...

Palpatine stood in his office, looking out over the Coruscant sky as the sun peeked over the horizon.

"You asked to see me?" Tarkin asked, as he entered.

"Yes, come in my friend," Palpatine replied.

"What is it your excellency?" Tarkin asked.

"Skywalker and Kenobi have been poking around far too much," Palpatine replied.

"Do you think they will find anything?" Tarkin asked.

"We cannot take the chance that they might. But I have a plan..." Palpatine said, with an evil smile.

"What do you plan to do?" Tarkin asked.

"You shall see, my friend," Palpatine replied.

Padme hummed to herself, as she scrolled through a data catalog, looking at baby furniture. She had already ordered a double hover stroller and two bassinets for when the twins first arrived. A speeder landing on the veranda caught her attention. She looked up and froze in fear, as a bald woman clad in black stepped out. Padme stood up, as the woman entered her apartment.

"Senator Amidala," the woman said.

"Who are you!" Padme cried.

"My name is Asaaj Ventress and I've been ordered to capture you. Don't worry though, I won't be hurting you...yet," Ventress said. Suddenly, Lea walked into the room. Ventress' head shot toward her and she Force pushed Lea against the wall. Lea screamed, as she impacted hard and fell unconscious.

"LEA!" Padme screamed.

"Come now Senator," Ventress said, as she grasped Padme's wrists tightly.

"No!" Padme screamed and struggled. Ventress knocked her down and backhanded her across the face. Tears fell down Padme's cheeks, as the evil woman bound her hands and stuffed a cloth between her teeth, before tying it around at the back of her head.

" *Anakin!"* Padme screamed silently, hoping that he would hear her. Ventress threw Padme into the back of her speeder and flew off, heading for the nearest ship port.

" *Anakin!"*

Anakin suddenly fell to his knees, as terror gripped his heart.

"Padme..." Anakin uttered.

"What is it Anakin?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Padme, she's in trouble!" Anakin said, as he darted for his speeder.

"Anakin, wait!" Obi-Wan cried, as he hopped in the speeder with him.

Once they arrived home, they found the apartment in shambles. Obi-Wan rushed to Lea's unconscious form and tried to shake her awake.

"Lea...Lea, wake up," Obi-Wan said frantically. She moaned in pain and opened her eyes.

"Obi-Wan?" she asked.

"Lea, what happened?" he asked, as he helped her sit up.

"I don't know. I remember seeing this horrible woman barge into the apartment. Then she used the Force to throw me against the wall," Lea replied. Anakin picked up the small holo imager that was left behind and pressed play. An image of an unattractive, bald woman appeared.

"Greetings, Anakin Skywalker. My name is Asaaj Ventress. If you are seeing this, then I have your precious wife. If you ever want to see her alive again, you will come to the palace on Naboo. My esteemed colleagues and I will be taking the palace for our own soon. Be there in twenty four hours, or she dies..." the transmission ended. Tears streamed down Anakin's cheeks and his jaw was set in determination.

"Artoo, get the ship ready," Anakin said, choking back a sob.

"It is most certainly a trap Anakin," Obi-Wan told him.

"I don't care!" Anakin yelled, as he left for the ship. Obi-Wan looked down at Lea.

"Lea, I'm going with him. It would probably be best for you to stay here," Obi-Wan replied.

"No, I'm coming with you. Naboo is my home and Padme is my cousin. I'm coming," Lea replied. Obi-Wan sighed.

"Blasted stubbornness," he complained. A few moments later, the Sapphire Angel, Anakin and Padme's personal cruiser, blasted out of the Coruscant atmosphere with three passengers and two droids aboard. The course was set for their home planet of Naboo where they weren't sure what was waiting for them...

Identity Revealed

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here.

AN: Here's chapter 30! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 30: Identity Revealed

Anakin sat motionless in the pilot's chair of his and Padme's cruiser. They had come up with the unique name on their way back to Coruscant a few weeks ago. She had always told him that she loved his eyes. Indeed, they had been the first thing she had recognized about him upon their reunion after ten years. She had told him on many occasions that they were as blue as Nabooan sapphires and shined like them when he smiled or looked at her. He always insisted that she was an angel. Indeed, it had been his first question to her upon their first meeting when he was just a little boy. She had captivated him then and she still captivated him now. So, they had affectionately dubbed their ship, the Sapphire Angel. But now, Anakin's eyes didn't shine like the precious gems. Without Padme at his side, they had lost their luster. Now, they were dulled and stormy, as tears welled and dripped from them. A thousand things were running through his mind. He wondered if that evil woman had dared to hit his angel or hurt her. He worried doubly, knowing how delicate her condition was, being a month along with their precious twins. He placed his head in his hands and cried again. He didn't know what he would do if he lost any of them. Obi-Wan stepped quietly into the cockpit and laid a hand on Anakin's shoulder.

"It's going to be all right Anakin," Obi-Wan comforted him.

"I can't lose her Obi-Wan. I can't lose her or our babies," Anakin sobbed.

"You're not going to Anakin. We will get them back," Obi-Wan told him. Anakin wiped his tears away and nodded.

"Thanks Obi-Wan, how's Lea?" he asked.

"She'll be fine, just a bit of a bump on the head and a nasty headache," Obi-Wan replied. Anakin nodded, grateful that she hadn't been hurt worse. The console began beeping, signaling that they would be coming out of hyperspace in orbit of Naboo very soon.

"You should go back and get strapped in," Anakin said. Obi-Wan nodded and Anakin brought them out of hyperspace.

Anakin landed them in the docking bay and they disembarked. The palace was eerily quiet, but that was to be expected, considering it was likely that it was being held hostage.

"Lea, I need you to go. You'll be safe at Padme's parent's house," Obi-Wan said.

"I'm not leaving you!" Lea insisted.

"I can't have you getting captured too! They'll only use you against us, which is what they will already do with Padme. Go to the Naberrie's and wait for us. We will return and we will have Padme with us," Obi-Wan insisted. Lea wanted to protest, but she knew he was right. There was nothing she could do in a fight against the Sith. She nodded and kissed him passionately. Once they broke the embrace, she headed for a nearby speeder and flew it out of the docking bay and toward safety.

"They are here, my Lord," Dooku reported to the holo image of Darth Sidious.

"Good Lord Tyrannus. See that the Separatists leaders are on a ship en route to the Mustafar system. Have them and Ventress take the

Senator with them and make sure Skywalker follows them. When they arrive here on Mustafar, I will be waiting and I will finally eliminate Skywalker and his beloved Senator for good. You stay there and deal with Kenobi. Then, you will return to Coruscant and we will bring the Jedi to their knees. Without Skywalker and Kenobi, they will have no chance," Sidious said.

"Yes My Lord, retrieve the Senator from her cell," Dooku ordered to Ventress.

Padme curled up in her cold cell. The shackles bit into her wrists and the dried blood from the cuts was splotched on her torn dress. Her hair hung in disheveled ringlets, her eyes red from crying and her cheeks stained with tear tracks. The cell swung open suddenly, and Ventress stalked in. She roughly grabbed Padme by the arm and hauled her to her feet. Padme yelped in pain, as the woman began dragging her to the docking bay.

Anakin and Obi-Wan walked silently through the corridors of the Theed palace. Suddenly, Anakin stopped.

"I sense Padme...she's frightened," Anakin said. Anakin stopped, trying to sense which part of the palace she was in.

"She's in the docking bay! They're taking her off planet!" Anakin panicked and ran off in the other direction.

"Anakin, wait!" Obi-Wan called. He was about to follow when he sensed a dark presence behind him. He slowly turned to meet the person waiting for him.

"Dooku," Obi-Wan spat with disgust.

"Hello Obi-Wan, it has been a long time. I haven't seen you since you were still Qui-Gon's padawan," Dooku mentioned.

"Yes, and what would my master think of you now? I'm sure he'd be disappointed," Obi-Wan replied.

"Don't be so certain Obi-Wan. We're not so different, you and I. Nor is young Skywalker. We all see what an abomination the Jedi Council has become. The rigid old fools have been dealing face to face with the Sith Lord for the past thirteen years and they still have no knowledge of it," Dooku said.

"What are you talking about?" Obi-Wan asked. Dooku chuckled.

"My master is waiting for him. The Separatist ship is probably already taking off with him following them. As long as they possess his beloved wife, he'll follow them anywhere. When they arrive at their destination, my master will be there. Skywalker and his wife are as good as dead," Dooku said, with an evil chuckle.

"NO!" Obi-Wan cried angrily, as he brought his sapphire blade up to strike Dooku. Dooku laughed and met it with his own crimson blade.

Anakin watched, as the Separatist ship's thrusters began to hum. He ran as quickly as he could to the Sapphire Angel, and fired up the engines. Artoo, track that ship and don't lose them!" Anakin ordered, as he prepared them for take off and slammed the throttle down. The Sapphire Angel followed the Separatist ship out of Naboo's atmosphere. Artoo tracked them and locked on the coordinates they had set. Both ships jumped to hyperspace right behind one another.

"Where are they heading?" Anakin asked, as he read the translator.

" *The Mustafar System,"* Artoo whirled.

"Mustafar? What's it like there?" Anakin asked.

" *Almost entirely volcanic. A large lava river runs through the entire planet,"* Artoo answered.

"A lava river? Sounds lovely," Anakin answered sarcastically.

"I suppose that there would be a lot of steam and energy sources on a planet with that much fire," Anakin reason. Artoo chirped a yes.

"A good place for another droid factory, like the ones on Geonosis and Dantooine, I suppose," Anakin replied. Artoo chirped another yes. Anakin nodded and sat back in his seat. Reaching deeply into the Force, as Obi-Wan had taught him, he attempted to calm himself. He sank into a deep meditation to prepare himself for the upcoming battle with Ventress. He just prayed to the Force that they hadn't hurt his angel. Little did Anakin know, Ventress wouldn't be the only fight he would be engaging in on Mustafar...

Dooku's saber clashed furiously with Obi-Wan's.

"Tell me...where they are going!" Obi-Wan cried, as he held his saber in a deadlock with Dooku.

"I'm afraid I cannot allow you to interfere, Obi-Wan. The chosen one has proven that he will not join us, so he must be eliminated, just as you must!" Dooku said, as his saber clashed in several devastating swipes.

"Qui-Gon would be proud. You have become a great warrior. It is too bad that you fight for the wrong side," Dooku chided.

"Qui-Gon Jinn was a great man. The same cannot be said for you!" Obi-Wan cried, as flipped around and brought his saber down on Dooku. The older Jedi flipped around and met Obi-Wan saber with his own. Obi-Wan growled, as they fought for control. Obi-Wan caught Dooku by surprise and his saber passed through his right limb, severing it right above the forearm. Dooku cried out in pain and snarled at the Jedi. Angrily, he reached into the Force and hit Obi-Wan full force with a blast of Force lightning. Obi-Wan howled in pain, as he was thrown to the ground. As Obi-Wan managed to look up finally, Dooku was already gone. He headed for the docking bay.

His master was on Mustafar, facing the chosen one and he had seen this as an excellent opportunity. Dooku had never desired to follow his master for long, but rather overthrow him and become the master himself. He had sent an anonymous tip to one of the holonet news stations, telling them that the fight between the Sith Lord and Skywalker would be taking place on Mustafar. He would be revealing his master's identity to the whole galaxy this way, including himself, while he returned to Coruscant to wait for the outcome. If Skywalker defeated his master, it would save him doing so and vice versa. Either way, he would face and defeat either Skywalker or his master and become the true Sith Lord. Dooku fired up the thrusters on his ship and headed for Coruscant. The droid transports that he had ordered ready from Gunray were already en route and he would have what he needed to capture the Galaxy's capital for his own...

Obi-Wan quickly recovered from the Force lightning and headed for the docking bay to find a suitable ship. He had no idea where Anakin was, but if he could hail him, he could find out.

"Come on...come on..." Obi-Wan said. But all he got was static. Wherever Anakin was, he had probably landed not too long ago and the planet he was on was causing too much interference.

"Blast!" Obi-Wan screamed. There was no way he could help Anakin or tell him that the Sith Lord was waiting for him. But he did have a good idea that Dooku would be going to Coruscant, so quickly he set the course and blasted into hyperspace...

The Sapphire Angel loomed into the sooty atmosphere of Mustafar. Anakin saw the Separatist ship on the landing platform and another ship nearby on another platform.

"Holonet reporters? How in the Sith did they find out about this place?" Anakin wondered allowed. His attention drifted back to the other platform, as Artoo began the landing sequence. His eyes blazed with anger, as he watched Ventress roughly drag Padme inside the structure.

' *Anakin, let go of your anger,' Qui-Gon spoke.*

"Master? How can I? They've done so much to hurt her!" Anakin cried.

' *Yes Anakin, but love is much more powerful than hate. Use love as your strength, not hate, just as you always have,'* Qui-Gon instructed. Anakin reached deeply into the Force to draw on those feelings he held for Padme. He calmed himself and let Padme's love wash over him.

"Thank you master," Anakin said into the Force, before he shed his cloak and stepped down the ramp of the ship, heading for the structure.

Dooku reached Coruscant and sought out medical attention. Once a healer had fitted him with a suitable prosthesis, he killed the healer and headed for the Senate building. As Dooku arrived at the Senate building, so did his droid army. As Dooku entered the Senate building, saber blazing, his army of droids fought their way in through the Clone Troopers. Those in the Senate building at the time took cover wherever they could. Dooku smiled evilly and headed for the Chancellor's office...

When Dooku killed the red guards, he marched into Palpatine's office, expecting to find him there. But the person he found waiting for him was not Palpatine, but rather acting Senator Tarkin.

"Where's the Chancellor?" Dooku asked, his saber humming at his side. Tarkin chuckled, acting if the blazing saber did not scare him in the least.

"Where do you think he is?" Tarkin asked.

"What is that supposed to mean?" Dooku demanded.

"Think about it my friend. A Sith Lord controlling the Senate. Palpatine was never simply the pawn of the Sith Lord," Tarkin smiled evilly. Then it dawned on Dooku. Palpatine *was* Darth Sidious. His master had deceived him all along! But then, he supposed that was the nature of the Sith, for he too planned to betray his master.

"So, you've been in league with him all along?" Dooku asked.

"I'm in league with whoever has the power to rule the galaxy," Tarkin replied.

"There is a very good chance that the boy could kill the old man. Tell me why I shouldn't kill you?" Dooku asked.

"Because, while you have the power of the Force, I possess the tactical genius needed to pull off something like this. Why do you think Palpatine has kept me so close? I have no Force powers, but I possess the same dreams as both of you. This Republic is dying and it is time that it is replaced with something greater," Tarkin said. Dooku thought for a moment and then extinguished his saber.

"Then I guess we will be working together," Dooku replied.

"Where is master Sidious!" Nute Gunray demanded angrily, as they entered the control room. Ventress dragged Padme behind her and then shoved her against one of the panels.

"Shut up," Ventress growled.

"Well, Senator, it seems that you will finally pay for all your transgressions," Gunray said, as he grasped her arm.

"When Master Sidious joins us, you will finally die and I will enjoy every last moment of it," Gunray spat at her.

"I'm afraid Master Sidious sends his regards. He won't be joining us and he has informed me that all of you have outlived your

usefulness," Ventress said, as she drove her saber through Poggle the Lesser and Rune Haako. Screams of terror filled the chamber, as Ventress began executing the Separatist leaders. Nute Gunray stood terrified before Asaaj Ventress. Just as Ventress was about to kill him, the glow of a sapphire light saber pierced through the metal door. When the owner of the saber had melted enough of the metal to pry the door open, he did so and stepped inside the room.

"Ani!" Padme breathed a sigh of relief, as her husband stood tall and proud before them. He gave her a small smile and sent her comforting waves of love through the Force. His stare turned to ice, as he stared at Ventress and Gunray.

"So good to finally meet you Skywalker. I will take great pleasure in killing you," Ventress hissed in her low, raspy voice.

"You will try," Anakin replied calmly, as his saber met hers. Ventress grew continually frustrated, as she fought him furiously. Anakin's saber strikes were fluid and certain, as he met Ventress blow for blow. Growing increasingly frustrated, her strikes became languid. As a last ditch effort, she shot Force lightning from her fingers. Anakin caught the lightning with his saber. But being inexperienced in dealing with Force lightning, Anakin quickly lost control of the situation and the lightning seared into his body, dropping him to the floor.

"ANAKIN!" Padme cried, wanting to run to him.

"Stay back Padme!" Anakin called, as he slowly hauled himself up from the floor. Anakin ignited his saber again. Bringing it over his head, he slammed it down on Ventress, his taller form towering over her.

"After I take care of you, I'll take great pleasure in killing your wife...and children," Ventress goaded. Anakin's blood ran cold, as her words struck him hard. Anakin let his love for Padme and his unborn children flow through him, renewing his fight.

"You will do nothing of the kind," Anakin spoke, as he brought his saber around. She met it with her own, but now found herself shadowboxing. His movements became faster than she could predict and his presence in the Force burned too brightly for her dark soul. Ventress became frightened, as the light seemed to shine through his eyes, his gaze piercing through her.

"Your love for that woman makes you weak!" Ventress spat.

"You're wrong...and you know it. Love makes me strong and it's something you will never know. For that, I pity you," Anakin said, as he passed his saber through her neck, severing her head from her body. Nute Gunray looked at the young man fearfully. Like a coward, he grabbed Padme's arm and pressed a blaster to her head. Anakin reached out with his hand and pulled the blaster from Gunray's hand effortlessly. Padme pulled away from him and turned to him, kicking him squarely in the stomach. He yelled in pain, before angrily trying to grasp for her neck. But he was stopped dead in his tracks, as he felt a searing pain in his abdomen. He looked down, only to see Anakin's saber protruding from his body. He looked up into the young man's icy stare as he spoke.

"You'll never hurt her again," he said, as he pulled the saber out of Gunray's body and the viceroy slumped to the floor, dead. Anakin severed the shackles around Padme's wrists and she threw her arms around him. Anakin held her tightly and then pulled back to kiss her passionately. Their lips moved over each other's feverishly, drinking in the taste of one another.

"Oh Ani," she sobbed into his chest.

"I was so worried about you. Did they hurt you? Are the babies okay?" he asked frantically.

"I'm fine Ani, we're all fine," she replied.

"Still, I'll feel better when I get you back to Naboo and to a healer. And these cuts on your wrists need treatment before they get

infected," Anakin said, as he wrapped his arm around her waist and led her out of the structure, headed for their ship. Once outside, Anakin stopped them suddenly, as a black cloaked figure waited for them on the platform. Slowly the hooded figure turned around and only his nose and mouth were visible.

"Who are you!" Anakin demanded. The figure chortled an evil, sickening laughter that sent shivers up his and Padme's spine. The man removed his hood and both husband and wife gasped in disbelief. The face was very familiar to them, but the horrible yellow eyes that glared out at them were something they had never seen on him.

"Chancellor Palpatine?" Padme asked.

"Yes my dear," he replied.

"It's been you all along! You're the Sith Lord!" Anakin screamed.

"Very good Anakin. You fell right into my trap. Now, I will destroy you," Palpatine cackled, as he ignited his saber. Anakin pushed Padme back and ignited his own, preparing to engage in battle against the Sith Lord himself...

The Chosen One Arises

Disclaimer: It's George's sandbox. I just play here, cause it's fun.

AN: Here's chapter 31! Thanks for all the great reviews!

Never Gone

Chapter 31: The Chosen One Arises

Lea stopped the speeder and jumped out, running into her aunt and uncle's home. She looked around and ran to the sitting room where she found her family and Anakin's family gathered around the Holo viewer. She gasped, as she realized what was on the screen.

"What's going on?" Lea asked, as she looked around.

"We were hoping you could answer that. The Holonet reporter said that this is coming from some planet called Mustafar. What in blazes are Anakin and Padme doing there?" Ruwee asked.

"I wish I knew. This all started when some Sith assassin kidnaped Padme to lure Anakin back to Naboo. Once we got here, Obi-Wan made me leave to get to safety. It must have been part of the Sith's plan to separate Anakin and Obi-Wan. They obviously used Padme to lure Anakin to Mustafar," Lea said, as she watched her frightened cousin. Padme watched on in horror, as her husband fought the Sith Lord.

"I can't believe it!" Lea said, as she finally got a look at the Sith Lord's face.

"What is it?" Shmi asked. Lea looked at her, noticing that she was very pale and shaky.

"The Sith Lord that Anakin is fighting is Chancellor Palpatine," Lea said.

" *That* is the Chancellor of the Republic? Owen asked in disbelief.

"I'm afraid so. This whole thing was a trap for Anakin," Lea said. Shmi began to sob again and Cliegg comforted her.

"I'm going to try and get a hold of Obi-Wan," Lea said, hoping that he was all right.

Obi-Wan ran up the steps of the Jedi Temple to inform them of what was going on. He held the important data chip securely in his hands. For weeks, he and Anakin had been trying to figure out the codes on this data chip that Anakin had swiped on his second trip to investigate Tarkin's office. He knew they were something vitally important and something possibly of danger to the Jedi and the galaxy.

As he entered, Aayla Secura saw him.

"Obi-Wan!" she called.

"Aayla, I must see the masters. Anakin and Padme are in terrible danger," Obi-Wan said.

"We know. Haven't you see the Holo news?" Aayla asked.

"No, I haven't, why?" Obi-Wan asked.

"There is something you need to see. The masters are in the situation room," Aayla said, as she led him there.

"Obi-Wan, we thought you'd be with Anakin. What are you doing here?" Mace asked.

"Padme was kidnaped by a Sith assassin. We were lured to Naboo and then separated on purpose by Dooku. Asaaj Ventress took Padme and got Anakin to follow her. I don't know where they are, so I returned to Coruscant, because I knew that's where Dooku would

go. He informed me that wherever Ventress was leading Anakin to was a trap set for him by the Sith Lord," Obi-Wan replied.

"He was telling the truth," Mace said, as he pointed at the holo screen.

"Force..." Obi-Wan said, as he watched his brother meet the Sith Lord's saber attacks furiously.

"It's been Chancellor Palpatine all along," Obi-Wan said.

"Yes, we have been blind," Shaak Ti admitted.

"This makes it even more imperative that we decipher the meaning of these codes on this data chip," Obi-Wan said.

"What codes?" Kit Fisto asked.

"I'm not entirely sure, but I believe they are codes that hold a specific meaning or order to the Clones. Anakin thought so as well when he snatched this data chip from acting Senator Tarkin's office a couple weeks ago," Obi-Wan said.

"Anakin broke into Senator Tarkin's office?" Mace asked.

"He believed that Tarkin was in on a plot to harm his wife and it appears that he was right," Obi-Wan replied.

"Why have we not heard about this data chip before now?" Pablo Jill asked, a slight amount of venom in his voice.

"None of your were interested in anything Anakin and I had to say. You dismissed his vision of Ventress and then she turned up after all and kidnaped his wife. As Padme is fond of saying, this whole mess is the result of a failure to listen," Obi-Wan replied.

"Right Obi-Wan is. Blind we were not to see the Dark Lord when right in front of us he was. Trapped the Chosen One, the dark Lord has. Partially our fault he and his wife are in danger, it is," Yoda said.

"You can't be serious Master Yoda," Mace said.

"There is no proof that the boy is the Chosen One either," Adi Gallia argued.

"No? He has defeated three of the galaxy's worst assassins and I have confidence that he will defeat Sidious," Obi-Wan said.

"It is an eight hour journey from Coruscant to Mustafar. Do we even attempt to send anyone there?" Kit asked.

"Over it will be by then. Discover the significance of these codes we must. Great danger the Jedi are in, I fear," Yoda said.

"But how do we go about deciphering the codes?" Kit asked.

"The Kaminoans likely programmed the codes into the Clones at Dooku's command," Obi-Wan said.

"Go to Kamino master Fisto and Knight Secura will. Make them tell us what they mean and how to prevent tragedy, they will," Yoda ordered. Kit and Aayla nodded and immediately left for the trip the Kamino. Suddenly, Barriss Offee ran into the room.

"Masters, the Senate building and the Temple have been surrounded by droid armies!" Barriss said.

"Get to the Senate building we must before allowed to escape Dooku is," Yoda said. The Jedi left the room, preparing to fight for their Temple. Obi-Wan spared one last glance at the Holo screen.

"May the Force be with you, Anakin," Obi-Wan said, as he drew his saber and left.

Sweat poured down Anakin's face, as he clashed sabers furiously with Palpatine. Palpatine cackled evilly, as the young man met his every saber thrust.

"Yes...you are powerful young one. Join me...and together we can rule the galaxy. You would have everything and anything you desire. Your wife and family would be safe, as long as you served me," Palpatine taunted.

"My family won't be safe...until you're dead," Anakin said, as he reached up and swiped his brow with his sleeve. Palpatine frowned and snarled.

"Then if you will not join me...you will die!" Palpatine screamed, as she brought his saber up and then down on the young man. Anakin caught his saber with his own blue blade and struggled to overpower the Sith Lord. Palpatine cackled evilly.

"Your love for that useless woman makes you weak," Palpatine sneered. Anakin snarled.

"You'll find out just how weak I am!" Anakin said, as he pushed Palpatine back. Their sabers crackled and hissed, as they met blow for blow. Anakin flipped over Palpatine and whipped around, trying to catch him by surprise. But the experienced Sith Lord whirled around and met his attack. Palpatine chuckled.

"Kenobi has taught you well. But your feeble skills are no match for the power of the dark side," Palpatine sneered, as he swept his leg under Anakin's feet and pushed the young man back. Anakin fell to the hard ground on his back and skidded back painfully.

"Ani!" Padme screamed. Palpatine cackled, as he grabbed her arm.

"You know Senator, you may still be of some use to me," Palpatine said, as he began pulling her toward a hovercraft used to travel across the lava river on the dangerous planet.

"Anakin!" Padme screamed, as she fought and struggled to get away from Palpatine.

"You know Anakin, if you will not turn, then perhaps one of your children will. Perhaps I will keep the good Senator alive long enough for her to bear your children. Once I choose my heir, I will eliminate her and the other child," Palpatine cackled, as the hovercraft hummed to life and left the platform.

"Nooooo!" Anakin screamed, as he got up and raced for the other hovercraft, taking off after them in across the lava river. Padme huddled in the corner of the hovercraft, trying not to cry. But the tears came anyway, as she was carried farther away from her beloved. She wrapped her arms protectively around her mid section, never wanting Palpatine to lay a hand on their twins.

Anakin sped his hovercraft up beside Palpatine's. The evil Sith Lord struck at Anakin with his saber and Anakin parried. Palpatine sneered and shot Force lightning at his enemy. Anakin screamed in pain, as the lightning knocked him off balance. He quickly recovered and stood back up. He hopped onto the ledge of his hovercraft, painfully aware of the endless lava river below him. Deeply rooting himself in the Force, Anakin Force jumped onto Palpatine's hovercraft and met the Sith Lord's saber, as it was brought crashing down on him.

"Young fool, you seriously underestimate the power of the dark side," Palpatine spat.

"And you underestimate the power of love!" Anakin retorted, as their sabers clashed furiously, as the hovercraft continued to fly across the sweltering lava river.

Aayla Secura and Kit Fisto arrived on Kamino ahead of schedule and quickly demanded to speak to Prime Minister Lama Su.

"What may I do for you honorable Jedi?" Lama Su asked, after they had been escorted to his meeting room by Taun We.

"We need you to tell us what these codes mean. And we must have the truth," Kit said sternly.

"There are only two codes here of real importance," Lama Su said, as he scanned the information on the data chip.

"Tell us what they mean. Millions of lives could depend on it," Aayla pleaded.

"I have been ordered never to tell by Count Dooku," Lama Su replied.

"Count Dooku is no longer in control of the situation. Tell us what you know and we will see to it that the gesture serves as a form of clemency for your cooperation. We can extract the information with a mind probe, but we prefer not to resort to something so barbaric," Kit said. Lama Su sighed and agreed.

"The first one is called order 66. It can only be activated by the voices of Darth Sidious or Count Dooku," Lama Su said.

"And what is the purpose of this Order 66?" Aayla asked.

"It would order the Clones to turn on the Jedi and kill them and any of their conspirators," Lama Su said. Kit and Aayla gasped in horror.

"And the second order?" Kit asked.

"Order 99 is the fail safe that Count Dooku had programmed into them in the event that he or Lord Sidious ever lost control of the Clones," Lama Su replied.

"What exactly does Order 99 do?" Aayla asked.

"Unlike order 66, order 99 is not voice activated. It requires a special password to be activated and can be done by anyone who possess that password. It releases a lethal chemical into the bloodstream and stops the heart instantly. It is quick and painless," Lama Su said. Both Aayla and Kit looked at each other sadly. They didn't like the

idea of killing the Clones, but it was either them or the Jedi. The Jedi had never had complete control of the Clone army. Palpatine possessed the ability to take control anytime and eliminate all his adversaries.

"Tell us the password. The lives of millions depend upon it," Kit said. Lama Su sighed and handed them a data chip.

"Open a comm channel from your Jedi Temple to all the Clones. Execute order 99 and recite the password and it will be done," Lama Su said sadly. Kit nodded and took the chip.

Aayla and Kit returned to their two seated star fighter and opened up a comm channel with the Temple.

Obi-Wan and the other Jedi fought the droids back from the entrance of the Temple.

"Masters! There is a transmission from Master Secura and Master Fisto!" a young padawan informed them. Yoda, Mace, and Obi-Wan left the battle and headed for the situation room.

"Greetings masters, we have learned much in the last hour. It seems that the Sith possess the power to take control of the Clone army at any time with Order 66," Kit said.

"Is there a way to stop it?" Mace asked.

"No master, but there is a way to neutralize the threat completely," Aayla replied.

"How?" Obi-Wan asked.

"We must open up a comm channel to all the Clone troopers and execute order 99. The order must be followed up with the code: one–alpha–zero–two–bravo. And the password: True are the ways of the

dark side. The Sith shall rule the galaxy forever," Kit recited. Obi-Wan nodded, successfully taking it all down.

"No choice we have. Execute order 99, we must, if to save the Jedi Order and the galaxy, we are," Yoda spoke. Obi-Wan nodded and opened the necessary comm channel...

Sweating profusely now, as the hovercraft floated past a lava waterfall, Anakin clashed furiously with Palpatine. His muscles ached and burned, but his petite wife in the corner kept him going strong, as his desire to see her safe drove him above all else.

"You know, I've been thinking Anakin. Perhaps after your wife gives birth to one of my new apprentices', I will keep her around for a while. She is very beautiful and would make a nice addition to my collection of concubines," Palpatine taunted with a cackle. Anakin snarled, as he swept his saber furiously, meeting Palpatine's own thrusts.

"I will never let you lay a hand on her, you sick bastard!" Anakin yelled. Palpatine cackled again.

"It does not matter Anakin. Even if you managed to defeat me, you, your family, and your Jedi friends are still dead," Palpatine goaded.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Anakin bit out, as their sabers hissed and crackled.

"Soon, I will execute order 66 and turn the Clone army on the Jedi. Even if you kill me, there is no way to stop it and the Jedi and their conspirators will die!" Palpatine yelled, as he slashed wildly at Anakin. Palpatine laughed at the surprised looks on Anakin and Padme's faces.

"The Clones are already here, at the orders of Chancellor Palpatine. Look around," Palpatine said. Sure enough, back on one of the platforms, a battalion of Clone troopers stood ready for orders.

Suddenly, the Clones began to falter and started dropping to the ground. Anakin and Padme looked confused, while the evil smile disappeared from Palpatine's face. It was replaced by a look a fury and rage, as he grabbed his comlink and searched for the correct frequency in which the Clone's would respond to. The cultured voice of Obi-Wan Kenobi met their ears.

"Clone army, this is General Obi-Wan Kenobi. Execute order 99. Code, one–alpha–two–bravo. Password, True are the ways of the dark side. The Sith shall rule the galaxy forever," Obi-Wan recited. Palpatine let loose with an angry howl, as he crushed the comlink in his hand. Anakin smirked.

"It seems that part of your plan isn't going to work, thanks to master Obi-Wan," Anakin taunted.

"No matter, I will still kill you Chosen One and then I will rule this galaxy!" Palpatine screamed, yellow eyes bleeding at them.

"No, you're the only one that's going to die today, Sidious," Anakin replied. Their sabers clashed, meeting in another deadlock. Sidious laughed, as he Force pushed Anakin against the edge. He brought his saber down, preparing to slash Anakin across the chest. Moving quickly, he dashed out of the way, but not before Sidious' saber grazed his chest. Anakin cried out in pain, as the saber burned him, leaving a laceration. Padme cried out in horror, as she could see the red line across his chest through his now torn open tunic. Fortunately, after a brief inspection, Anakin determined it was only a surface burn. Gritting his teeth, he pushed the pain away and staggered to his feet. Anakin brought his saber up and met Sidious' again, but the Dark Lord turned Anakin's aside and circled with him. Cackling evilly, the Sith grabbed a hold of Padme's arm and hauled her to her feet.

"One step closer and I push your beloved wife over the edge!" Sidious taunted.

"Nooooo!" Anakin screamed...

Count Dooku and Willhuff Tarkin watched on in horror, as the entire Clone army fell dead.

"How...how did the Jedi get a hold of Order 99?" Dooku wondered. Tarkin snarled.

"Skywalker and Kenobi were poking around too much. They must have found the codes and discovered what they meant," Tarkin reasoned. Dooku thought for a moment.

"All is lost," Tarkin said.

"No, all is not lost. We still have the plans for the Death Star. If we could get away, we would live to enact our revenge. Come, this way," Dooku said. The two men hurriedly made their way to one of the space ports.

"Report Master Gallia?" Yoda asked, as she entered the room with the other council members.

"We have successfully dismantled the threat of the droid armies. The Clones are dead, but I'm afraid Dooku and Tarkin have escaped," Adi reported. Yoda nodded, knowing that there was no immediate threat from them. They would retreat to plot their revenge, but this time, the Jedi would be ready for their return. The real fight was still going on and the Council members, including Obi-Wan turned back to watch the raging battle taking place over a river of lava.

"If you join me, I will spare her," Palpatine said, as he pushed Padme forward over the side so she could look at the lava below. Tears fell down Anakin's cheeks, as he watched the Sith Lord prepare to throw his wife over the side. He would do anything to save her, but he knew that Palpatine was lying when he said that he would save her.

' *Help me save her...please!"* Anakin pleaded to the Force.

' *Let go young one," Qui-Gon told him.*

" *What do you mean master?" Anakin asked.*

" *Let go and release everything into the Force. Let it fill you completely. Only few beings possess the connection with the Force that you do. Immerse yourself and become one with it's power. Only then, can you save Padme and defeat the Sith," Qui-Gon replied.*

" *But...I don't know how," Anakin fretted.*

" *Let go young one...let go," Qui-Gon instructed.* Anakin listened and did as he was instructed.

"Sweet Force..." Obi-Wan gasped, as he watched the white light surround Anakin's body.

"What's happening?" Mace Windu asked.

"Merging with Anakin, the Force is. Using him as it's instrument to destroy the Sith it is. The Chosen One, the boy is," Yoda concluded, as they and the entire galaxy watched on in wonder.

Palpatine snarled, as he felt the pure goodness of the power emanating from the young man before him. Anakin's eyes snapped open, and Palpatine tried to hide his shock and fear. His sapphire eyes were now lit with a white light, making them appear to glow. Palpatine snarled evilly.

"You have no true power. Allow me to show you the power of the dark side!" Palpatine said, as he shoved Padme over the edge. Palpatine cackled evilly and Padme screamed. But both ceased when Padme stopped in mid air. Slowly she floated up and over the side, straight into Anakin's arms. He smiled gently at her, as she stared at him in awe.

"Everything will be all right now angel," he told her softly, as he set her down behind him. Anakin turned back to Sidious and ignited his sapphire blade once again. Sidious let out a maniacal scream.

"I will kill you both!" he screamed in rage, as he let the Force lightning flow out of his fingers and toward them. Padme ducked away, but the lightning never came close to her. Anakin's light saber and the strange lightwere absorbing most of it. Sidious angrily poured more into his attack, but the lightning was being stopped by the strange white aura around Anakin. It was much too late when Sidious realized that his attack was bouncing off the strange Force shield around Anakin and Padme. The Force lightning was reversed and sent back at him. The incredible force of the attack sent him over the edge and falling toward the lava river. Anakin and Padme looked over the edge, as Palpatine's body fell. His screams filled the air around them and they soon turned to screams of agony when his body caught fire, as he neared the river of fire. Padme pulled back in horror and turned away from the gruesome sight to bury her face in Anakin's chest. Palpatine soon crashed into the flowing lava, incinerating every last bit of his body. Anakin held Padme close, as the white glow around him slowly faded. He stumbled slightly and fell to his knees.

"Ani, are you okay?" she asked. He looked up at her and gave her a half smile.

"I'm fine angel, just a little drained," he replied.

"It's over, isn't it?" she asked, hope shining in her eyes.

"Yes, it's over my love. He'll never hurt us again," Anakin said. Padme threw her arms around his neck. Their lips met in a passionate, deep kiss and for a few moments, they drowned in the feel of each other. Anakin reluctantly pulled back and stepped to the controls of the hover craft. He slowed them down and turned them around, heading back to their ship. Anakin was very aware of the Holo news crew following them. Once he landed the hover craft, he quickly whisked Padme into his arms and into their ship before the

reporters could hound them. A few moments later, the Sapphire Angel left Mustafar headed for Coruscant...

In the next chapter, everyone reacts to Anakin's victory. Tarkin and Dooku have disappeared without a trace. And the galaxy begins to clean up the mess left behind by Palpatine in the final chapter of Never Gone. But don't worry, there will be a sequel! I will reveal more about the sequel at the end of the next chapter! Thanks for reading and let me know what you think:)

Love Can Ignite the Stars

Disclaimer: I don't own Star Wars. It all belongs to George.

AN: Here's chapter 32! This is the final chapter, but there will be a sequel. More details at the end of the chapter on that.

Never Gone

Chapter 32: Love Can Ignite the Stars

Lea's ship landed at the Temple, where Obi-Wan waited to greet her. The ramp dropped on her ship and she rushed down and Obi-Wan caught her in his arms. She clung tightly to him for a few moments, afraid that he would disappear.

"I'm so glad you're okay," she said.

"I'm fine my love," he replied, as he leaned down and pressed a soft kiss to her lips. Lea couldn't keep the tears back any longer and began to softly cry into his chest.

"Lea, it's all right. Everything is fine now," Obi-Wan replied. She sniffed.

"I know, I don't know why I'm crying. Just hold me," she snuggled against his chest, as he tightened his hold around.

"Always, I love you Lea," Obi-Wan told her.

"I love you too Obi-Wan," she replied. Their lips met in another deep, passionate kiss.

Padme sat quietly in front of Anakin, softly cleaning the saber burn on his chest. He watched her, mesmerized by her more than usual.

She finished cleaning the burn and the bacta's pain killers were quickly kicking in.

"Ani, what exactly happened out there?" Padme asked. He looked up at her.

"I'm not entirely sure myself. Master Qui-Gon spoke to me and told me to let go. I don't know what he meant really, but I listened to him and tried to do what he told me. Then suddenly, it was like this light filled me and all I could think about was how much I love you and how much I needed the strength to save you," Anakin tried to explain.

"Ani, you were glowing. It...it was the most amazing thing I've ever seen," Padme said, admiration shining in her eyes. He pulled her into his lap and gently stroked his fingers through her long brown tresses.

"I think the Force merged with me Padme, though I don't really know how or why," he replied.

"You're the Chosen One Ani, no one can deny that now," Padme replied, pride shining in her eyes.

"But what does that mean exactly? Was I just chosen to destroy the Sith?" Anakin asked.

She smiled, and brushed her fingers through his hair.

"I don't know my love. But I do know that you're mine first and always. I know that you're my husband and the father of my children. I know that you're a hero and that you just saved the galaxy today. And most of all, I know that I love you more than anything and that we'll be together forever," Padme said passionately, as she cupped his face in her hands. Anakin reached up and took one of her small hands in his own and kissed her palm.

"I love you too. You're my everything Padme. I couldn't exist without you," he told her, as he gazed into her captivating brown eyes.

"I couldn't live without you either," she replied, as she stared back into his sapphire eyes. He gave her a crooked smile, as he kissed her hand again. She felt herself melting under that gaze and a shiver of anticipation run down her spine, as he leaned in and pressed a kiss to her shoulder. She felt herself go limp in his arms, as he covered her mouth with his own in a soul searing kiss. The fire of their love burned brightly and consumed them, as they became one...

Once Anakin and Padme's ship arrived on Coruscant, they were mobbed by the Holonet reporters. Fortunately, Obi-Wan and Lea were waiting for them and whisked them home to Padme's apartment. Once they arrived home, Anakin and Padme retired right away, both being exhausted.

Lea stood on the veranda in a long, lavender nightgown. Obi-Wan stood behind her, his arms wrapped around her mid section. Lea leaned her head back against his shoulder. Obi-Wan softly trailed kisses down the nape of her neck.

"Lea, there's something I need to ask you," Obi-Wan said softly. She turned to face him.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Lea...I love you, more than anything. You've changed my life in more ways than I ever imagined possible. You've shown me that there is more to life than duty and responsibility. You've taught me what live is and that true love does exist and that it's not just something out of a fairy tale. What I'm trying to say is that I want to spend the rest of my life with you," he said, as he clasped her hands in his own.

"Lea, will you marry me?" Obi-Wan asked. Tears welled in her eyes and a few escaped down her cheeks.

"Yes...yes..." she cried, as she flung her arms around his neck. He hugged her tightly, before pulling back os he could kiss her passionately. Soon, their kisses became feverish and Obi-Wan scooped her up.

"Take me to bed, my love," Lea whispered. His lips came crashing down on hers again, as he carried her to their bedroom...

The next few months brought the beginning of a heavy clean up process for the Republic that would take time. The damage to the once dying Republic was great, thanks to Palpatine's rule. An extensive investigation into Palpatine's dealings and all those linked to him was being headed up by Anakin and Obi-Wan. Just within the first six months, hundreds of arrests were made, thanks to them both. Thanks to Obi-Wan and Anakin's investigation, those in league with the Dark Lord were exposed and arrested. It seemed that many knew who and what Palpatine was and chose to follow him with the promise of wealth and power. Indeed, Anakin proved that Panaka had been behind many of the assassination attempts on he and Padme. Unfortunately, Panaka had escaped with Dooku and Tarkin and disappeared. Six months after Palpatine's death, Bail Organa of Alderaan was elected Supreme Chancellor, thanks to heavy support from Padme and many of his other colleagues. The danger to Padme's life, as well as Anakin's life was not completely gone. There were many that would have loved nothing more than to see him dead. Palpatine's death had cost them their wealth and freedom, thanks to Anakin. But after seeing him actually kill the Sith Lord, there was reluctance among even the most hardened assassins to take him on. Several planets remained resistant toward the Republic and refused to join. The most vocal being Cato-Neimodia, where Gunray's nephew, Aron Gunray, continued his campaign against the Republic. A young, charismatic Neimodian, he was immediately installed as Viceroy upon his uncle's death. He made it no secret

how much he hated Naboo and its Senator and her husband. He blamed Anakin for his uncle's "murder" as he liked to call it and tension between the two planets only increased. Once things started to settle down, the Jedi Council called Obi-Wan and Anakin to a special meeting.

Anakin and Obi-Wan were admitted to the Council room. There were two chairs in the center and Mace motioned for them to sit down.

"We have called you both here today to discuss something very important with you both. First of all, we owe you both an apology. It seems you were right about the Sith Lord. Without the both of you, the Clones would have turned on us and the Sith would have risen to power. We ask that you both accept our apology for not acknowledging your suspicions," Mace said. Both Anakin and Obi-Wan nodded.

"Thank you masters," Obi-Wan said.

"In light of what happened on Mustafar, none of us can deny that you truly are the Chosen one, Anakin. We believe that despite your attachments, you belong here in the order. That is why we have decided to make an exception for you both and allow you to join us," Mace said. Anakin's brows furrowed in confusion.

"An exception? You mean, you're not going to change the code?" Anakin asked. He looked around the room. He couldn't get a clear reading on Yoda's feelings, but that was nothing new. Mace was confident in what he was saying. Adi Gallia and Pablo Jill were as well. And he even detected a bit of contempt toward he and Obi-Wan, as he always had from them. But Shaak Ti, Kit Fisto, and Ki Adi Mundi's emotions were all conflicting and unsure.

"No, the code will remain unchanged. We do not feel that attachment is right for everyone," Mace replied.

"Shouldn't you allow the individual to decide whether or not attachment is right for them?" Anakin argued. Mace shook his head.

"Our code has served us well for centuries. Only a few have fell to the dark side," Mace reasoned.

"Served you well? The Jedi have become stagnant, because they refuse to change," Anakin replied.

"This is not a subject that is up for discussion, Skywalker," Pablo Jill said. Anakin glared at him.

"But he is right master Windu. How can you expect the other Jedi to live by the code, when Anakin and I are exempt?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Nothing has changed for them. They will be expected to adhere to the code, as they always have," Adi stepped in.

"The order is dying. By revising the code, perhaps we can repair the image of the order to the people of the galaxy. Because, I'll be honest, many have lost faith in the order," Obi-Wan said.

"No thanks to you or Skywalker," Pablo Jill bit out. Mace put his hand up to silence the other master.

"That is why we hope you will join us. With the both of you to advocate for the order, we can rebuild our image among the people. You can encourage parents to give their children to the order to help rebuild us, for we have suffered greatly at the hands of Palpatine and the Clone Wars. The people may be more apt to let their children come to us when they see that your own are being raised here in the temple," Mace said. Anakin's eyes widened, wondering if he'd actually heard right.

"My children will not be raised in the Temple. They will be raised at home with their mother and I," Anakin replied icily.

"Surely you jest, Anakin. You're children will likely be strong in the Force. They will need to properly trained," Adi said.

"Properly trained? In other words, trained to know no love! I wouldn't have defeated the Sith if it hadn't been for love. I would never deny my children of knowing how vital, important, and wonderful love is! Nor will I help you steal children from their parents! And I will not be a poster boy for something I don't believe in, like your hypocritical code! So you can forget it!" Anakin yelled.

"Obi-Wan, do you share Anakin's sentiments?" Mace asked sternly.

"Yes, I agree with him. He is right. We will not be used. Unless you consider changing the code for all Jedi, we cannot be a part of this," Obi-Wan replied. Mace nodded.

"Very well then. This meeting is over," Mace replied. Obi-Wan glanced around the room at the other members. He could sense that the council was very divided on a lot of matters. The question was, how would it effect the future of the order? That was something only time would tell.

"I don't believe them! They have a lot of nerve! Like Padme and I would ever let *them* raise our children. And what does master Jill have stuck up his ass? And master Windu? I think all his hair fell out, because it got bored with him. Does the man know how to smile? He and master Gallia should enter a scowling contest, but then again, maybe not, because it would probably never end," A small smile crept onto to Obi-Wan's face. It was quite often that Anakin went off on one of his little fits. And Obi-Wan usually found them quite funny.

"...if there was an event in the Galactic Olympics for who is the most hypocritical Bantha rear in the galaxy, they'd all be going for the gold! Take about a bunch of old idiots that really need to get laid!" Anakin finished his rant and Obi-Wan chuckled.

"Feel better?" he asked, with a smile. Anakin sighed.

"Yeah," Anakin replied, as they arrived home and parked the speeder.

Lea stood facing Obi-Wan, as the Nabooan sun dipped below the horizon. He smiled and lifted her veil. He drew her into a passionate kiss, sealing their union. The Naberrie, Lars, and Skywalker families watched on happily. It had been one year now since Anakin had defeated the Sith. The Republic continued to rebuild itself and the Jedi Order continued to deteriorate. Obi-Wan and Anakin had become highly respected and sought after agents for the Republic, handling many duties. The Republic was going through many changes, but the Jedi stayed the same. Because of this, they were slowly fading away, yet they refused to do anything about it. It pained Obi-Wan greatly, but only the Jedi themselves had the power to change their fate. And what fate the Force had in store for the once great order had yet to be seen. Obi-Wan held his new bride in his arms tightly, as they shared their first dance together as husband and wife.

Much later, Anakin and Padme stood out on the balcony under the blanket of stars with their four-month-old twins. Luke and Leia babbled incoherently, as Anakin and Padme talked softly. Padme leaned her head against his shoulder and sighed with contentment.

"Oh Ani, before you came back into my life, I never would have imagined that I could be so happy," she told him.

"Me either angel," he replied, as he kissed Leia's head.

"And I never imagined that I could love three people, as much as I love you and our twins," Anakin told her. She smiled brightly at him, as they shared a soft kiss. Luke yawned and soon, his twin yawned as well.

"Come on, I think it's time to put our little angels down. Then, mommy and daddy can have some quiet time together," Padme

said, as she kissed Luke's head. Anakin chuckled.

"Well, I'm not sure how quiet it's going to be," Anakin gave her a sly smile. She giggled, as they entered the nursery. The twins had already had their evening feeding, so Anakin and Padme changed them and then placed them in their crib. Anakin wrapped his arms around her waist, and looked down on their sleepy children, as Padme sang them a soft lullaby. Once they were asleep, Padme picked up the baby monitor and they retired to their bedroom.

Anakin watched her, entranced by her beauty as usual, as she brushed out her long curls. He slowly stepped toward her and wrapped his arms around her waist, while placing soft kisses on the nape of her neck. Padme turned in his embrace and kissed him passionately. The twin moons of Naboo shined down on them, bathing them in a silver glow. Padme allowed herself to be swept into his arms, as he plundered her mouth with his searing, wanton kisses. Soon, Padme felt like she was floating and indeed she was. Anakin grinned at her, as he resumed kissing her soft, full lips. Padme's eyes opened wide, as she felt them rise higher and higher.

"Ani, the twins," she said.

"Relax angel, they're asleep. I'll know it if they wake up," Anakin said, as he took them high enough, so the view of Rori, one of the moons, seemed a lot closer.

"Obi-Wan would be very grumpy if he knew I did this," Anakin chuckled.

"And why's that?" she asked.

"Because, I'm not supposed to use the Force to levitate myself unless I absolutely have to," he replied. Padme smiled.

"Well, this is very romantic, so I'd say it's justified," she replied. Anakin smiled and kissed her sweetly. Padme melted in his arms, as their kisses grew passionate and deep. Slowly, Anakin lowered them

back to the veranda, before sweeping her into his arms and carrying her back into their bedroom. Their love and passion burned brightly, as they loved each other. There were many things about the future that Anakin and Padme Skywalker were unsure of, but their undying and powerful love, was not one of them. Anakin often remembered the words Padme had told him when the parted all those years ago when he was just a boy.

" *You're never gone Ani, because in my heart is where you are,"*

Their love had brought them back together ten years later and those words had held true. They would be together forever and Never Gone from each other ever again.

The End

To be continued in the sequel...Never Gone II. Coming soon!